(6)

GHOST IN THE MACHINE

by

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and

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REVISED

FADE IN:

In the thinning light of a late summer afternoon, STORM CLOUDS begin to gather against a reddening sky.

EXT. ROOF -- SAME

The long flat surface is broken up by clusters of air conditioning outlets. From somewhere in the building below comes the sound of a low, deep HUMMING.

INT. SECURITY ROOM

The HUMMING is louder now. A bank of TV monitors flicker in the darkness, switching black and white images of a vast chambered room, filled with a huge computer...

INT. COMPUTER ROOM

The cathedral-like space throbs with the HUMMING SOUND of the vast machine, lights winking on and off along the lines of information-processing units.

But as we MOVE CLOSER we see this is a machine which has seen better days, the LETTERING on its scattered keyboards worn away by years of use, the slow spinning of its REELS OF MAGNETIC TAPE giving it a faintly retro look -- in fact, in the SHIVERING LIGHT of a fusing fluorescent bar high on the ceiling above, a faintly sinister look.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET -- SAME

The storm clouds are closer now, darker, making the lights in the peaceful TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE across the street glow in the dusk.

MOTHER OS
Come on, honey, dinner's ready.

A DISTANT RUMBLE filters across to us. We notice the yard. the lawn neatly mowed, the beds filled with carefully tended flowers.

FATHER OS
Steve, check the windows are shut
up there.

And faintly at first, but gradually growing louder comes the SOUND OF MUSIC. Sixties music.

STEVE OS
(a young kid's voice)
Why can't Kerrie?

And suddenly the mailbox is blotted out as

A RUSTY RED CHRYSLER IMPALA

slides to a halt at the end of the yard.

MOTHER OS
Steve...

The music playing on the eight track is "Never Go Home" by the Shangri-La's.

INT. CAR

The cigarette lighter pops out and the unseen driver holds up the red hot filament to his cigarette. His fingers are long, almost artistic, except for the nails which are BROKEN and DIRTY.

The man opens an EXPENSIVE-LOOKING ADDRESS BOOK and flicks slowly through the pages.

CLOSE UP: THE BOOK

many of the names have been carefully CROSSED OUT with a red pen.

He stops at the final name in the book, one of the entries without a line drawn through it, and touches it gently with a broken nail -- YARDLEY.

ANGLE: THE MAILBOX

painted in a cheerful yellow, leaning out at the end of the yard. And printed out across it, the family's name...

YARDLEY

Suddenly we wish the Yardleys had gone out tonight.

CUT TO:

A JUMBO JET

as it THUNDERS into land, its wheels SQUEALING and SMOKING rubber as it touches down.

WIDER: AIRPORT -- SAME

The HUGE PLANE taxis towards us as TERRY MUNROE watches at the edge of the apron in her airline uniform, the wind from the approaching storm tugging at her hair. She's a good-looking woman, with fine, even features, the kind of wholesome American mother Japanese car makers use in TV commercials to sell us four door hatchbacks.

As the plane pulls slowly to a halt she snaps open the channel on her walkie-talkie.

TERRY
Okay, Frank, she's in. Baggage is on carousel B-2. Laura can handle it from here.

She glances at her watch, waves at the man in the orange overalls guiding the plane in, then catches a ride with an AIRPORT TUG coasting away across the tarmac.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASKETBALL COURTS -- LATER

Terry's Volvo pulls up and she glances across at the courts, deserted now except for the SOLITARY FIGURE sitting on a basketball under one of the metal hoops. Terry taps her horn twice but the figure doesn't move.

ANGLE: THE THIRTEEN YEAR OLD BOY

whose attention she's trying to attract.

This kid is Kriss-Kross cool, baggy pants, low-slung hooded jacket, battered Converse,All Stars, and up this close we can hear the THUMPING BEAT from the Walkman that's blotting out the sound of his MOM'S HORN.

His fingers work expertly at the buttons of a GAMEBOY, as he progresses smoothly to level forty-seven of Tetrus II.

Finally he looks up as TERRY snaps off his Walkman.

TERRY
(beat)
Hi, Josh.

Josh nods.

JOSH
Mom...

TERRY
Sorry, I'm late, sweetheart, my last flight got delayed.

JOSH
Hey, no problem...

He stands up, nonchalantly bouncing the ball.

JOSH
Job comes first, right, Mom?

Then he turns and walks away to the car. Terry stares after him for a moment, taking in a deep breath. This is just another battle in what's been a long war.

INT. CAR

Josh snaps his tape into the stereo and turns up the volume DEAFENINGLY LOUD as Terry climbs in beside him and starts the engine.

EXT. STREET

With the music still POUNDING they pull off into the traffic.

INT. CAR

Terry sniffs, smelling something. She glances across at Josh then turns down the stereo.

TERRY
Have you been smoking again?

JOSH
Aw, gimme a break, Mom...

She leans across and smells his t-shirt.

TERRY
You _stink_ of cigarettes!

The horn of a car coming in the opposite direction BLARES OUT as Terry, distracted, drifts across the center of the road.

JOSH
Please, Mom, don't lose it, not
while you're driving...

TERRY
(losing it)
I thought we had an agreement
about this!

JOSH
(snaps back)
I thought we had an agreement
about the time you were picking me
up!

TERRY
We're not talking about me.

JOSH
That's right, we never do talk
about you, do we, Mom? Its always
gotta be me!
(glances up)
Stoplight.

TERRY
(ignoring him)
I'm not the one keeps getting in
trouble!

JOSH
Trouble? How much more do you want
from me?! I make decent grades, I
don't cut class -- you want me
hanging out with the stoners,
getting wasted every afternoon?

TERRY
I don't think that's your only
choice!

JOSH
(suddenly yells)
STOPLIGHT!

Terry has to slam on the brakes and swerve to the side as a HUGE TRUCK blasts across the intersection in front of her, its horn BLARING.

A beat. They both sit there for a moment, not saying anything. Finally...

JOSH
(shaken)
No matter how many cigarettes I
smoke, Mom, red light always means
stop.

He looks across at Terry, still gripping the wheel very tight.

JOSH
You okay?

Slowly she nods.

JOSH
(beat)
Maybe I should drive?

On Terry's look, we...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE YARDLEY'S HOUSE -- SAME

Still as picture perfect as before.

INT. HOUSE -- UPSTAIRS

A baseball and glove are resting at the top of the banisters as the theme music from THE SIMPSONS filters up to us.

INT. KITCHEN

A pile of plates and cutlery sit beside the sink, an apple pie rests on the kitchen table, freshly baked.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The chairs are pushed back from the half-cleared table, the corner of the red and white check tablecloth shifts slightly in the breeze...but nobody's sitting there -- the Yardley's have all vanished.

Slowly we slide across the room, until finally we find them.

The Yardleys are all sitting in front of the TV, their backs towards us, spread out along the sofa, sitting very close. They don't move, they don't talk, they just watch.

ANGLE: THE TV

The Simpsons are playing, Bart arguing ludicrously with Homer.

BART

I said, eat my shorts, man.

And very slowly we begin to turn away from the TV, until the full, jarring horror becomes apparent...

THE YARDLEYS

are all dead. Blood is sprayed all over the wall behind them, soaked into the sofa and carpets, thick on their clothes, still dripping from their mutilated bodies. They've been carefully arranged in descending height, the flickering light of the TV playing over their gruesome faces.

INT. CHRYSLER IMPALA

The door opens and the faceless driver climbs back inside. He's holding something in his hand.

ANGLE: A BLOOD-SMEARED PHOTOGRAPH

of the Yardleys, smiling together in a long ago family portrait.

The driver lays it down beside the leather-bound address book then carefully DRAWS A LINE through the Yardleys' name.

And as we PULL BACK

WE SEE HIS FACE

for the first time. Fleshy, sweet-smelling...evil. His skin is soft and white, his lips, full and wet, but it's his eyes that will haunt us, cold, colorless, completely dead -- a Hieronymous Bosch face for a Norman Rockwell America.

He chuckles to himself.

KILLER
Eat my shorts, man.

EXT. IMPALA

He walks round to the trunk and pulls it open.

ANGLE: THE TRUNK

A sight to turn even Wes Craven's stomach. Laid out along the BLOOD-SMEARED plastic sheeting that covers the lining inside are a long line of BUTCHER'S KNIVES, rolls of MASKING TAPE, coils of STEEL ROPE, all of them SMEARED WITH BLOOD.

He pulls across a LARGE SCRAPBOOK and opens it revealing the pages of BLOOD-SMEARED PHOTOGRAPHS inside, Moms and Dads, sons and daughters. Carefully he sticks in the picture of the Yardleys.

He gazes down at it for a moment then stretches for a moment before climbing back into the car and starting the engine.

EXT. STREET

And as he pulls away, a FORK OF LIGHTNING cuts across the sky, the storm finally beginning to break.

CUT TO:

EXT. MINI MALL -- LATER

The rain begins to fall, DRUMMING on the roof of Terry's car, pulled up outside a store with the name COMPUTER UNIVERSE emblazoned across the front.

INT. COMPUTER UNIVERSE

Terry stands beside a smooth-looking SALESMAN in front of a large display of software and PC's.

TERRY
I'm surrounded by computers at work, but to be honest with you I don't understand them at all, I just want something as a gift, for my boss...what was it called, Josh?

Josh has already planted himself in front of a row of demo PC's.

JOSH
(without looking up)
Desktop software.

TERRY
(looks back at the salesman)
Right, this guy, he's, uh...very organized.

SALESMAN
Well, you want organized, we got just the thing...

He takes a boxed set of discs from the shelf behind and feeds one into the demo PC on the cash desk.

SALESMAN
"Paper Warrior", designed by anal obsessives, for anal obsessives.

He clicks the mouse, flicking each new display onto the screen.

SALESMAN
For your scheduling it gives textular spread sheet displays in multiple axially or vertically arranged fonts...

Terry stares at him, blankly.

JOSH OS
Yeeeeaaaaoooowwww!

Josh is now excitedly playing a GULF WAR GAME on one of the other demos, hammering at the keyboard as Scud missiles sweep in towards him.

Terry notices the salesman's irritated look.

TERRY
Josh, you wanna hold it down a little, please...

JOSH
(completely absorbed)
Holy Cow! He's taken out another!

TERRY
Joshua!

Josh looks up, distracted, and his carrier is immediately BLOWN TO PIECES.

JOSH
(to Terry)
Jesus, Mom, you let them nail me!

Terry looks back at the salesman.

TERRY
I'm sorry...

SALESMAN
That's, uh...that's okay -- I was about to show you the address book function, you just scan the entries right in. Have you got an address book on you?

TERRY
Oh, uh, sure...

She searches through her chaotic handbag then pulls out a BATTERED FILOFAX. Terry is definitely fighting a paper war, pages have torn loose and been stuffed in the back, along with clumps of unpaid bills and old postcards.

SALESMAN
Might want to consider one of these yourself.

TERRY
Like I said, me and computers...

The salesman shrugs then opens the book at random, happening to find the first page of entries for the letter "M". But as he reaches for the scanner he suddenly notices something.

SALESMAN
Don't touch the printers!

Terry turns round as Josh pulls his hand away from a LASER PRINTER, the front door of which he'd already pulled open.

JOSH

Chill, man, I wasn't gonna touch the cartridge...

Terry snaps the door closed and glares at Josh.

TERRY

(under her breath)

How hard can it be to just stand there and wait for five minutes?

JOSH

I spend my life waiting for you.

TERRY

I'm not getting into a fight with you about this, not here -- now either you behave or you can go and wait in the car.

She turns back to the salesman.

TERRY

(beat)

Okay, the scanner...

The salesman stares back at Josh for a moment then flicks on the scanner.

SALESMAN

Just draw it from top to bottom across the page...

Terry watches as the page from her address book scrolls out across the screen.

We see the first few names very clearly, the scrawled handwriting printing out in bold courier caps...

FRANK MALLORY

ELLIOTT MILLER

CAROL MASON (DOGWALKER)

MY CARPHONE

MOM

DONALD MCCKAY

SARA MUELLER

NEAL MARLENS

CHARLIE MILHAUPT

MELISSA MALKIN

Terry looks up at the salesman.

TERRY
(impressed)
That's great...

SALESMAN
You just repeat the procedure for each page.

He scans in the second page of M's as Terry watches.

TERRY
I think it's perfect, I'll take it.

As she pulls out her billfold, we see

JOSH

still brooding, as he glances across at a display of PERIPHERALS. He glances back at Terry and the salesman then reaches out and grabs a MODEM, slipping it inside his jacket. He glances around, nobody saw him, he half-grins, but as he turns he walks straight into

THE YARDLEYS' KILLER

who must have walked through from the stockroom.

Josh can hardly breathe, the man must've seen him. But he gives nothing away, just gazes down at him with cold, expressionless eyes.

JOSH
I was, uh...I was just...

The man doesn't move an inch. A beat.

SALESMAN
(looking up)
Is there a problem, Karl?

Terry glances over too.

TERRY
What's going on?

Josh looks up at the still silent Karl.

JOSH
Nothing -- nothing's going on.

Glancing back at him he walks gingerly across to the door.

JOSH
(to Terry)
I'm gonna wait in the car.

Puzzled, Terry looks across at Karl, then back at the salesman. Then she signs the credit card voucher.

TERRY
Well, thanks for your help.

Then she scoops up her credit card and the software package, and hurries out after Josh.

KARL WATCHES THROUGH THE WINDOWS

as the Volvo pulls away in the rain.

CLOSE UP: KARL

as his eyes slide slowly across to the cash desk, and

TERRY'S ADDRESS BOOK

still lying open beside it.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP: A COMPUTER SCREEN

as cutting edge GAMES GRAPHICS flash past us.

WIDER -- JOSH'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Josh sits in front of his sticker-covered PC, taking the game to its final level. Behind him clothes are scattered across the floor, the bed is unmade and posters of Ice-T and Arrested Development cover the walls as HEAVY RAP thumps from the stereo.

ANGLE: JOSH

as one-handed he pulls open a drawer, reaches underneath and while he still plays the game with his free hand, pulls off the PACK OF CIGARETTES taped on the bottom. He pulls one out with his lips and lights up.

INT. HALLWAY -- SAME

Terry walks in from the kitchen, searching through her bag, trailed by her mother, a slightly overdressed but still elegant woman in her fifties. She's holding a department store package.

TERRY
He's thirteen years old, Mom, he doesn't need an electric razor.

MOM
(arch)
What he needs is a father, but I see you making no attempt in that direction...

TERRY
Don't start, okay?

MOM
Fine -- ignore me. I don't know why I bother.

She hands Terry the bag.

TERRY
(slightly impatient)
It's the middle of summer, what do I need with an electric blanket?

MOM
Honey, your AC's got two settings, broil or freeze your skinny tush off.

TERRY
(calling up the stairs)
Joshua! Have you seen my address book?

MOM
You got no man to keep you warm....

TERRY
How come everyone's over this divorce except you?

MOM

Everyone?

Mom glances pointedly up at the MUFFLED RAP MUSIC. Terry stares at her Mom.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMPUTER UNIVERSE -- LATER

The store is locked up now, a CLOSED sign hanging across the door as the rain washes past in the storm drains. Inside the phone begins to RING, over and over again.

INT. COMPUTER UNIVERSE

Karl suddenly walks into the darkened store from the stockroom, where he must have been locking up. In the deep shadow he looks even more sinister than before. He goes across to the phone and answers it.

TERRY VO

Hi, this is Mrs Munroe, did I leave my address book there this afternoon?

Karl reaches into his coat and pulls out Terry's book.

KARL

Yes you did, ma'am.

TERRY VO

Thank God, my whole life's in that book.

Karl can't help smiling as his fingers slowly work through the pages of names.

KARL

Well, I guess this is your lucky day.

He stops at a photograph of TERRY AND JOSH smiling out at us from some safe, leafy yard. For a moment he gazes down at it.

KARL

I'll tell you what, I'll swing by on my way home, drop it off for you...

TERRY

Well...are you sure that wouldn't be a problem?

Karl smiles.

KARL
Hell no -- be a real pleasure.

For a moment we HOLD ON him. A beat. And as the sound of the SHANGRI-LA'S begins to filter across again, getting LOUDER and LOUDER, we...

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY -- LATER

The storm is still raging, the dirt roadside turning to mud beneath the pounding rain. Traffic threads its way along the two lane road, wipers beating at the downpour.

The Chrysler Impala rushes by.

INT. IMPALA -- MOVING

Karl HUMS along to the music.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The Impala is moving in a line of traffic immediately behind a Datsun. Suddenly it pulls out and begins to pass.

The traffic coming in the other direction swerves, horns BLARING, as the Impala impassively continues its maneuver and cuts in front of the Datsun. It stays there for a moment then pulls out again.

INT. IMPALA -- MOVING

Through the windshield the lights of the oncoming traffic glare and dazzle. More horns BLARE and tires SCREAM on the wet cement. Karl is completely emotionless, still HUMMING calmly as suddenly...

THE HEADLIGHTS

of some vast truck bear down on the car.

EXT. BEND

The Impala tries to swerve past the truck, but its clipped on its offside wing and sent spinning off the highway, smashing through the barrier.

EXT. CEMETERY

A large cemetery is stretched out eerily beneath the storm.

THE IMPALA

suddenly crashes through the bordering railings, thumps down on its roof and begins to gouge a path through the graves.

INT. UPTURNED IMPALA

As the Shangri-La's continue to WAIL, headstones, marble crosses, granite urns rush at the car, splintering the windshield, smashing into the bodywork before it THUMPS into a thick granite mausoleum and

BURSTS INTO FLAMES.

And suddenly we're into a desperate RUSH OF IMAGES as Karl is CUT FROM THE CAR, the flames being sprayed with foam, LOADED INTO AN AMBULANCE, a plasma drip being fitted, rushed down HOSPITAL CORRIDORS until suddenly there's complete silence and stillness as someone slides us into

AN MRI BODY SCANNER

and we're encased in its long steel cylinder, layered with light sensitive cells.

INT. SCANNER UNIT

Nurses and doctors hover round the killer. His heartbeat registers on an EKG as a TECHNICIAN punches a button and the SCANNER begins to HUM into life.

INT. SCANNER

The killer's P.O.V. as the scanner's drums begin to rotate slowly round him and the lights in each cell begin to flick on and steadily grow brighter. His HEARTBEAT thumps, his BREATHING rasps.

ON THE TECHNICIAN'S MONITOR

a three-dimensional image of the figure in the scanner slowly begins to appear, becoming more precise and more detailed with each second.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Above the clusters of D.C. suburbs a small relay substation stands beside a two lane highway. THE HUM of the power lines feeding in on one side and out on the other is just audible above the storm.

Suddenly A HUGE FORK OF LIGHTNING snaps down and plays across the station's terminals in a lethal electric blue dance.

INT. SCANNER UNIT

The technician's screen suddenly flickers and goes to static.

TECHNICIAN
Shit.

DOCTOR
What is it?

TECHNICIAN
It's this storm. Keeps surging the power.

The scanner is now at full power, its drum whirring eerily around the killer. Its lights glowing.

INT. SCANNER - THE KILLER'S P.O.V.

as the drum circles his body and the lights flicker. His breathing is still ragged, his heart still thumping.

INT. SCANNER UNIT

TECHNICIAN
Five seconds to total scan.

EXT. HILLSIDE

Rain lashes down on the substation. Suddenly a second bolt of lightning TEARS through the storm and connects with one of the generator units.

The power surges again and the cap is BLOWN OFF in a shower of blue sparks.

Forks of blue electricity spray out, arcing up to the power lines on either side of the station.

INT. SCANNING UNIT

On the EKG the electronic heartbeat is getting more ragged.

NURSE
We're losing him.

On the technician's screen the 3-D picture is now even more detailed, thermal images of the killer's internal organs picked out in shifting patches of color, reds, blues, greens, all encased inside the latticework of laser colored lines that make up his skeleton.

TECHNICIAN
(looking up)
Scan's complete.

Suddenly a point of light appears in the very center of the screen and explodes outward filling the whole monitor with dazzling white light.

TECHNICIAN
(shielding his eyes)
Fuck.

The EKG suddenly goes dead as the killer's heart stops.

NURSE
Pulse is fading, he's dying.

INT. SCANNER

The killer's cold eyes flicker as...BLAM!

The whole screen fills with the same DAZZLING WHITE LIGHT that washed out the technician's monitor.

CUT TO:

THE SAME WHITE LIGHT

A long, long beat. Then faintly at first but gradually getting louder comes the sound of someone SNORING -- ragged, thick, the kind of snoring that is generally produced by too much drink and too little sleep.. And as we PULL BACK we see that the WHITE GLARE is now DAYLIGHT streaming through the windows of an old car.

WIDER -- CAR -- DAY

The driver's head is resting on the steering wheel as he sleeps. From this angle BRAM WALKER looks just about what he is, an amiable, world-weary man in his mid-thirties with what is going to be a world class hangover.

SUDDENLY THE DOOR IS RIPPED OPEN

and Bram topples out onto the concrete of the parking lot.

A SECURITY GUARD

looks down at him.

GUARD
(hard)
Can I help you, mister?

Bram squints as the sunlight plays Beethoven's Ninth on his tender neurons.

BRAM
I dunno...

He pulls himself to his feet. Behind him we can see that his car is LOADED DOWN with suitcases, furniture, fishing rods, in fact what looks like just about everything he owns in the entire world.

BRAM
You tell me a quick way to quit
smoking, drinking, recreational
drugs...oh, and casual affairs
with unsuitable women?

The guard looks back at him. A beat.

GUARD
You're the new systems manager,
right?

BRAM
(shakes his head)
I gotta get a new job description.

INT. COMPUTER PLANT -- DAY

Its the vast, slightly rundown, Gothic building we saw at the start. Bram's trying to LIGHT A CIGARETTE and keep up with PHIL JACOBS, a heavy set man who's sweating slightly into his crumpled suit as he hurries down the peeling lino corridor.

PHIL
Name's Jacobs, Phil Jacobs.

BRAM
Pleased to meet you, Phil.

PHIL
How was your flight?

BRAM
I drove.

Phil glances at him.

PHIL
From Los Angeles?

BRAM
Always been a personal goal of
mine to take a leak in every state
in the Union.

Phil looks at him blankly.

BRAM
That's a joke.

Bram finally manages to get the cigarette going and takes a deep drag.

PHIL
Never been much of one for jokes,
Walker...or smoking for that
matter --

He grabs the cigarette and stubs it out.

PHIL
But then I'm the dayshift manager,
so I usually get what I want.

He pushes through a set of security doors. Bram stares after him.

BRAM
My commiseration's to the
dayshift.

Suddenly one of the doors is pushed open again and Phil stares back at him.

PHIL
You're in the dayshift, asshole.

INT. ANOTHER CORRIDOR

Phil's moving even faster now.

PHIL
We're putting you straight to
work, gonna need all your hardware
experience right off the bat --
had a major electrical storm last
night, must've blown a couple of
circuits, machine's been acting up
all morning.

BRAM
Well, I was kind of hoping to take
a couple of days to get
acclimated, you know, settle in.

PHIL

I know there's people think you're some kind of computer hero, Walker, cut you all kinds of slack 'cos of that virus shit you pulled on the IRS, but I'll tell you something, round here no one's gonna treat you like goddam Robin Hood, hell no...far as I'm concerned you're just a keyboard schmuck who messed up his career for one lousy stunt.

BRAM

(beat)

Correct me if I'm wrong, Phil, but I'm beginning to feel you don't like me.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM -- DAY

They walk through into the cathedral-like chamber which houses the mainframe, shafts of sunlight angling down through the dirty windows high up on the walls. Cleaning staff are sweeping up the broken glass from the shattered lighting.

PHIL

There she is -- pretty impressive, huh?

Bram gazes at the computer for a moment.

BRAM

The last time a two series Vax impressed anybody we were all wearing bell bottoms.

PHIL

This machine does an outstanding job for us, mister Walker, and for your information some of the biggest companies in the States rent our mainframe time, and I'm talking Jet Propulsion Lab, the Rand Corporation, even IBM.

Bram gazes back at him.

BRAM

(dry)

Like I said at the interview, I'd have given my right nut to work here.

PHIL
Core business is the data-crunching, of course, mailing lists mostly.

BRAM
What kind of mailing lists?

Phil holds up a GARISH ENVELOPE with a big picture of ED MACMAHON grinning out from it holding a FISTFUL OF CASH.

BRAM
Junk mailing lists...?

Phil pats the top of a nearby processing unit.

PHIL
This machine pisses off more people than the IRS, and of that we are justly proud.

CUT TO:

A GREAT PAIR OF TAN LEGS

striding down the sidewalk.

WIDER - STREET - DAY

CAROL MASON, a gorgeous eighteen year old in running shorts and sneakers, walks along with a PACK OF FAMILY DOGS on leads.

EXT. TERRY'S HOUSE

Carol turns into the driveway.

CAROL
Okay, Axl, see you tomorrow.

One of the dogs, a friendly-looking FAMILY MUTT, wags his tail.

INT. TERRY'S KITCHEN - SAME

Terry is bustling back and forth, stuffing things into her briefcase as Josh takes another Pop Tart out of the toaster.

TERRY
I've gotta go, I'm so late --

She separates a FLOPPY DISC from a bunch of letters.

TERRY
Is this yours, Josh?

Josh glances up.

JOSH
Not near the fridge magnets!

He leaps up and snatches it out of Terry's hand.

JOSH
Never put discs near a magnet, Mom
-- they wipe 'em clean.

But Terry's already thinking about something else.

TERRY
Damnit, I forgot the cargo files.

She hurries off into the living room as the doorbell RINGS. Josh leaps up.

JOSH
That'll be Carol -- I'll get it.

INT. HALLWAY

As he runs out of the kitchen Terry looks in from the living room.

TERRY
I told you to cancel Carol last
week, you're on vacation now, you
can walk Axl.

Josh hasn't got time to react, he's busy squirting a shot of Binaca in his mouth and checking his hair in the mirror, then he takes the ELECTRIC RAZOR from his pocket and opens the door as casually as possible.

CAROL
Hi, Josh...

JOSH
(shaving)
Carol, babe...come in for a
minute, I'll toast you up a pop
tart.

CAROL
Thanks, Josh, but I'm kinda busy
right now.

He flicks the razor off.

JOSH
Well, you thought anymore about
Friday? Take in a movie perhaps,
dinner a deux...

Terry suddenly hurries between them.

TERRY
Carol, honey, Josh is going to take over for the rest of the summer.

CAROL
No problem, Terry.

TERRY
(to Josh)
Bye, sweetheart...

She leans down to kiss him. Josh recoils.

JOSH
Mom, Jesus...

Terry smiles at Carol, then walks down to her car. Carol hands Josh Axl's lead.

CAROL
(to Josh)
Maybe some other time.

Then she turns and follows Terry down the drive.

ANGLE: FRAZER HANES

a small black boy of about Josh's age, coasts across the street on his bike, flips it coolly up the curb, then as he catches sight of CAROL ploughs straight into the flowerbed.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERRY'S GARAGE -- LATER

Josh is standing by an ALARM CONTROL BOX mounted on the wall. Frazer stands in the driveway on lookout.

JOSH
You see anyone?

Frazer checks about.

FRAZER
No, it's cool.

Josh nods then levers off the back of the box revealing a series of CIRCUIT BOARDS.

JOSH
Is that a piece of work or what --

(glances at Frazer)
Phone company alarm, man, tied into their computer with a dedicated line...

He prods about with the end of his screwdriver.

JOSH
Must be this one, I guess...

Suddenly there's a FLASH OF SPARKS.

FRAZER
Christ, Josh!

JOSH
Okay, so it wasn't that one...

He goes back to his prodding.

FRAZER
Beats me why we can't just use a regular phone line.

JOSH
I told you, we're gonna need hours of phone time, this is perfect, my Mom won't even get the bills...okay, must be the phone line right here, hand me the clip.

Frazer hands him a long piece of cable that runs up the house and into Josh's bedroom. Josh clips it carefully onto the head of the alarm's dedicated line. Then he turns and grins at Frazer.

JOSH
Looks like we're in business.

CUT TO:

INT. SOFTEC -- DAY

Bram's sitting at a work station in front of a monitor. He stretches as if preparing to start work then reaches out and UNCLIPS THE SCREEN revealing it is in fact a SMALL NOVELTY COOLER. He glances round then takes one of the BEERS from inside, pops it and takes a swig.

ANGLE: OVER HIS SHOULDER

the monitor on the desk behind him suddenly SNAPS ON. The cursor pulses on and off for a moment, then the machine starts running, connecting to the PHONE COMPANY YELLOW PAGES. There's a beat then a long list of COMPUTER STORES begin to scroll up the screen, faster and faster until it suddenly stops as one is BLOCKED OUT.

CLOSE UP: THE ENTRY

Computer Universe. The cursor dials out the telephone number.

CUT TO:

INT. COMPUTER UNIVERSE -- SAME

The store is busy today, the salesman who helped Terry just one of the staff helping the pack of customers. As we watch, the DEMO PC which he used to show Terry the scanner, suddenly FLICKS ON.

CLOSE UP: THE SCREEN

as the modem CONNECTS and suddenly someone is SORTING THROUGH ALL THE FILES, opening and closing each one at an incredible speed until

THE PAGE FROM TERRY'S ADDRESS BOOK

is suddenly displayed on the screen. It glows there for a moment, then the screen snaps off.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT -- DAY

Heat shimmers across the runway as ANOTHER 747 thunders in to land.

INT. AIRLINE OFFICE -- SAME

Strip lighting, house plants, VDU's, and way too many people. This airline's outgrown its allocated space. Posters of exotic destinations cover the walls, odd pieces of lost baggage lie in the aisles.

In the midst of the chaos sits Terry, her desk awash with paper, as she works away at the computer terminal in front of her, a PHONE cradled in her neck.

TERRY
(glancing round)
You find that baggage yet, Lou?

A guy on the far side of the room looks up.

LOU
It came through Detroit, Terry,
you know anyone who's ever found
baggage in Detroit?

Another WOMAN looks up from the far corner of the room.

WOMAN
Hey, Terry, you got those landing
forms, Andy wants them?

TERRY
(making notes in a
pad)
Yeah, give me a minute.

A CHECK-IN CLERK puts her head round another door clutching a boarding pass and a ticket.

CLERK
Terry, do frequent flyers with
120,000 get the upgrade and the
blow-job, or just the blow job?

TERRY
(into the phone)
Is this Computer Universe? Don't
put me on hold again...shit!
(to the clerk)
Is this a real problem, Laura?

CLERK
Its a real problem.

Terry takes a deep breath and hangs up, glancing down at her computer.

TERRY
I don't believe it!

She slams the side of the monitor with her hand then shakes her head as FRANK MALLORY, a very neat-looking man in early middle age walks across to her.

FRANK
What's the problem?

TERRY
The goddam system went down again,
Frank! I just lost two hours of
work!

He leans across her keyboard and tries a couple of commands.

FRANK
How many times have I got to tell
you to back up your files?

TERRY
God, I hate these machines.

She gets up and walks angrily across to a water cooler. Frank follows her, smiling.

FRANK
For a bad-tempered, computer
illiterate you buy pretty nice
presents.

Terry looks back at him, and finally manages a smile.

TERRY
Well...not everyday of the week
your boss turns fifty.

FRANK
Forty-seven!

TERRY
Yeah, right, Frank, and safety is
this airline's first concern.

Frank smiles. An awkward beat.

FRANK
So, I was wondering whether you'd,
uh...thought about that dinner?

Terry looks at him. He's a nice man, and is obviously attracted to her but his attentions are getting difficult.

TERRY
I'm gonna have to see, Frank --
next week's kinda crazy for me.

He nods, accepting what he knows is a rejection.

FRANK
Well, you let me know -- oh, and,
I should have those Florida
tickets by then too.

Terry smiles and squeezes his arm, then her attention is distracted by the phone RINGING on her desk.

TERRY
Better run.

She goes back to her desk and picks it up.

TERRY
Eliott, hi...no, no, I'm glad you called, I uh... had a great time...

She glances round, hoping Frank can't hear her.

TERRY
Thursday's fine...okay, I'll look forward to it.

CUT TO:

INT. SOFTEC MAINFRAME CHAMBER -- DAY

Phil walks in and stops by the nearest PROGRAMMER.

PHIL
Where the hell is, Walker? I've been looking for him all morning.

PROGRAMMER
I think he went downstairs.

Phil stares at him.

PHIL
Downstairs? There is no downstairs.

INT. COMPUTER PLANT VAULT -- SAME

It's pitch black down here, Phil's footsteps ECHOING around the eery chamber as he stumbles forward along the PALE BEAM of his flashlight.

PHIL
Walker? Walker!

Phil's heart almost explodes through his chest as

BRAM'S FACE

horrifically lit up by his own flashlight, suddenly bursts from the darkness right in front of him.

PHIL
Jesus Christ...

He has to sit down to catch his breath.

BRAM
(grins)
Little jumpy today, Phil.

PHIL
Scared me half to death for crissakes.

Bram shakes his head.

BRAM
You think that's scary, you should see this.

Bram leads him through into the next section of the crypt-like space where the light's a little stronger.

PHIL
The hell is this place?

A CHAOS OF CABLES

curl across the floor, up the walls, and bunching into vast clumps, run through hatches in the ceiling to the mainframe above.

BRAM
This, Phil, is your switching yard...every piece of information the computer crunches comes in or goes out down one of these cables, telephone links over there, power lines here, client user ports, overload circuits...

PHIL
(cutting in, impatient)
Just tell me you've found the problem and fixed it.

BRAM
What I've found is where your problem got in...

He pulls up one of the clumps of wiring, the SCORCHED PLASTIC and MELTED FILAMENT still smoldering slightly.

BRAM
Melted everything, right down to the copper filament in the wire.

PHIL
Caused by that storm?

BRAM
Looks like it, some kind of power surge.

PHIL
And that's why we're getting all this junk upstairs?

BRAM
Could be...might've burnt out a couple of circuits somewhere -- problem is something might have come in with it.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM -- SAME

One of the monitors suddenly FLICKS ON and as we watch the screen shivers with graphics as it CONNECTS OUT through ARPANET. There's a beat, then TERRY'S TRW scrolls onto the screen, the cursor pulsing after her name. Gradually it clears, being replaced by her DMV files, then her MEDICAL RECORDS, then her SOCIAL SECURITY record, her TAX record, her SCHOOL RECORDS every recorded detail of her life scrolling by faster and faster until suddenly

IT SNAPS OFF AGAIN.

INT. SOFTEC VAULT.

Bram gestures with a clump of burnt cables.

BRAM
These are phone lines, direct to the outside, and the night they burnt out, your password file was deleted too -- system's been wide open for two days.

PHIL
Are you talking about some kind of hacker?

BRAM
Hacker, virus maybe, could be anything...

PHIL
Oh this is just great.

Bram looks at him as he turns away, scowling.

BRAM
Gotta tell you something, Phil, thing I've noticed -- you don't handle stress at all well.

CUT TO:

INT. TERRY'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Terry's cooking dinner and trying to complete the paperwork she's got spread haphazardly out over the kitchen table.

INT. JOSH'S ROOM -- SAME

Josh sits in front of his PC, the stolen modem lying in his sock drawer, half-hidden, the cable running out the window and down to the garage. He's talking excitedly on the phone to Frazer.

JOSH
Hot? I'm telling you, Frazer, it's so goddam hot it's gonna melt your shorts.

We swing slowly round till we can see the screen.

A PNEUMATIC YOUNG WOMAN

smiles out at him wearing a mini skirt and thigh high boots.

WOMAN
If you'd like me to take off my top, please touch my breasts.

JOSH
Oh baby, whatever you say...
(into the phone)
Gotta go, Fraze, my computer wants me.

As he hangs up, his PC suddenly BLARES at him with the prerecorded sound of FRED FLINTSTONE.

FRED
Yabadabadoooooooo!

Josh frowns as a MESSAGE fills the screen -- E MAIL INCOMING.

JOSH
(puzzled)
E mail? Who knows my number?

He clicks open the file and suddenly the screen fills with the SAME MESSAGE, repeated over and over again...

DIE YOU GRAVY-SUCKING PIG DIE YOU MOTHERFUCKER DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE .

Josh stares at the screen.

JOSH
What the hell is this?

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP: A SILVER BALLOON

with the words, "To My Darling Terry" printed out across it.

WIDER -- TERRY'S OFFICE -- DAY

A HUGE STACK OF BALLOONS hangs above Terry's desk, which is buried under a mound of gift-wrapped MAIL ORDER MERCHANDISE, flowers, chocolates, baskets of muffins everything you can think of.

Terry's standing by her desk speaking angrily into the phone.

TERRY
I'll tell you what I'm so mad about, mister, I've got a pile of junk sitting on my desk's been billed to my credit card and I didn't order any of it!...I don't give a damn what your computer says, you can send someone over right now and pick it up!

She slams down the phone and glares at the balloons.

CUT TO:

INT. SOFTEC OFFICE -- DAY

Phil's trying to pacify what must be an ANGRY CLIENT on the end of one phone while another ANGRY CLIENT'S on hold on the other.

PHIL
I understand, Keith...of course I do...you've every right to be angry...

He switches phones.

PHIL
Henry...Henry, if you'll just listen a moment, I'm getting it all sorted out...

He gives up, dropping both phones as he marches out of his office, tearing the STRIP OF PRINT-OUT PAPER that's been taped across it.

INT. CORRIDOR

The strip of printout paper, covered with indecipherable COMPUTER LANGUAGE runs right the way down the near wall of the corridor, covering all the doors, stairwells, elevators, before disappearing round the corner at the far end. It then reappears round the other corner and runs all the way back down the far wall.

PHIL
What the hell is going on?

Bram suddenly ducks out of the office opposite.

BRAM
(cheerful)
Phil, man, how're you doing?

PHIL
How am I doing? I'm doing shit, Walker, I've got clients in there yelling for my blood 'cos our computer's shredding their data, and now I find you out here making goddam paper chains!

BRAM
You're really an angry person, Phil, you know, very unattractive quality.

PHIL
Tell me what is happening!

BRAM
Its hard to tell...I dumped the core, printed out every connection the mainframe's made over the last two days and from the look of it...a big chunk of memory's missing.

Phil stares at him for a moment.

PHIL
What?

Bram shrugs.

INT. MAINFRAME CHAMBER -- SAME

Graphics are flashing across one of the screens as the computer begins accessing one external network after another.

MAINLINE USA -- ON LINE

PRODIGY -- ON LINE

TELEDYNE -- ON LINE

UNIX -- ON LINE

INTERNET -- ON LINE

USENET -- ON LINE

And as each new connection is made it arcs out in laser bright colors over a THREE DIMENSIONAL MAP OF THE USA, like airline routes spreading out from a hub, the computer-generated image getting faster and faster until THE WHOLE COUNTRY, every network, every computer system, is suddenly linked and blotted out.

A long beat. Then, we...

CUT TO:

INT. TERRY'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Terry is YELLING at Josh in the kitchen.

TERRY
Why can't you just tell me the truth!?

JOSH
I told you, I don't know what you're talking about.

TERRY
The phone company called me at work, Josh -- they told me somone'd dialed seven thousand dollars worth of 900 numbers in the last twenty-four hours!

JOSH
Well, it wasn't me!

TERRY
And you honestly expect me to believe that?!

Josh looks back at her.

JOSH
Of course I don't, Mom - when the hell did you ever believe me!?

Then he marches out of the kitchen and stamps upstairs.

Terry stares after him for a moment then leans back against the wall and sighs. Everything seems to be going wrong. A beat. Suddenly she starts as the phone RINGS. Very tired she reaches out and picks it up.

TERRY
Who...?

CLOSE UP: TERRY'S WORRIED FACE

TERRY
I'll...be right there.

CUT TO:

INT. FBI OFFICE -- LATER

It's one of those oppressive, institutional offices with drab paint and uncomfortable furniture. Terry's sitting across from SPENSER and MARCHANT, two hard-looking special agents.

TERRY
Serial killer?

SPENSER
Under normal circumstances we wouldn't go into all the details but the press love these stories, and it's bound to come out he had your address book when he died.

MARCHANT
Figured it'd be better coming from us than the National Enquirer.

TERRY
What did he want with it?

The two agents glance at each other.

MARCHANT
Well...a new list of victims.

TERRY
(pause)
What...?

SPENSER
He got hold of people's address books, Mrs Munroe, then worked his way through them, sometimes killing the people listed, sometimes just torturing the owner.

Terry pales.

TERRY

Who was he?

MARCHANT

Name was Karl Hoffman -- he'd been in and out of state homes all his life.

SPENSER

He was severely disturbed, although his psychological reports all describe him as highly intelligent -- apparently the guy was some kind of genius with computers. Main interest outside of killing people was hacking into secure systems and infecting them with viruses -- Major Crimes had their shrinks draw up a profile for us.

He hands a copy to Terry.

SPENSER

They think he was motivated by a hatred of, uh...

(finds the reference)

...yeah, caring systems.

Terry looks puzzled.

MARCHANT

You know, families, friends, all the people you surround yourself with...

SPENSER

...all the people you put in your address book --

Terry slowly takes this in.

MARCHANT

Hoffman never had anyone, abandoned by his family, isolated by his mental illness. Only thing he could really talk to was his computer. To him a full address book represented everything he could never have.

(shrugs)

So when he found one...

Terry sinks back in her seat, very shaken.

SPENSER
If I were you I'd just try and
forget it, the guy's dead and
buried now.

Terry looks up at him.

TERRY
You make it sound easy.

Spenser shrugs. Then Terry gets up and with a final glance turns and walks out. A beat.

Marchant looks across at his partner.

MARCHANT
(pause)
You ever wonder how many address
books you're in?

SPENSER
Never -- it's one of the
advantages of having no friends.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUSH HOUR TRAFFIC -- NEXT DAY

Terry pulls out of the jam into a bank parking lot.

EXT. BANK -- SAME

She walks across to the ATM, pulling her card from her handbag, feeds it into the machine and taps out her number. The machine begins to WHIRR into life.

INSERT - ATM MACHINE SCREEN

"Welcome to Columbia Savings, T. Munroe" suddenly flashes onto the screen.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM

The reels of magnetic tape along one of the lines of processing units all stop spinning. A beat. The eery HUM of the mainframe still fills the room.

EXT. BANK

Terry selects her transaction.

INSERT - ATM MACHINE SCREEN

"Cash from Checking Account."

BACK TO SCENE

Terry then taps in $200.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM

As we watch the numbers appear one by one on a nearby terminal. The cursor winks on and off beside the final zero. And suddenly...

WE BURST THROUGH THE POINT OF PULSING LIGHT

and it's as if we're on a wild, computer-generated roller coaster through a maze of fibre-optic tunnels, switching wildly from track to track, blocks of information rushing by, until a point of light appears at the end of the tunnel, and we rush towards it until we slam to a dead halt on the inside of the ATM machine...

ATM MACHINE P.O.V.

Looking out at Terry.

EXT. BANK - TERRY'S P.O.V.

Terry stares impatiently down at the screen, the words -

INSERT - ATM MACHINE SCREEN

"One moment, please" wink on and off on the screen.

BACK TO SCENE

Terry glances at her watch then looks back at the line of people that's growing behind her.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM

On the screen scores of bank records are being scanned, one after the other, faster and faster, until suddenly Terry's details are flashed onto the screen.

INSERT -- COMPUTER SCREEN

The cursor flicks slowly down the columns of figures, of withdrawals and deposits, until it reaches the balance figure in Terry's checking account.

"$3182.52."

The figure is zeroed out. Then the cursor moves to the balance in the savings account.

"$10,765."

It zeroes that out too.

EXT. BANK

Terry smiles nervously at the man waiting at the front of the line.

TERRY
I'm sorry about this.

Suddenly the ATM's screen flashes out a new message.

INSERT - ATM MACHINE SCREEN

"Account canceled refer to bank."

And suddenly we're...looking out from inside the ATM...

BACK TO SCENE

Terry stares at the screen, unbelieving, then she thumps it with the palm of her hand. As she turns away we stay with

THE NEXT CUSTOMER

as he steps up to the machine. The screen flickers and for a split second...

INSERT -- ATM MACHINE SCREEN

A FACE stares out at us, evil, other-wordly, computer-generated...

THE TRANSFORMED FACE OF THE KILLER

Then it's gone and Terry's card slides out.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERRY'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Terry pulls into the driveway and climbs slowly out of the car. It looks like it's been a long day. She walks across to the mailbox and as she opens it

A MASS OF JUNK MAIL

waterfalls out from inside.

TERRY
(mutters)
Christ...

INT. HALLWAY -- SAME

Terry calls up the stairs as she walks inside, slitting open an envelope marked AMERICAN EXPRESS.

TERRY
Home, Josh!

From upstairs comes the sound of THUMPING RAP. She shakes her head and glances down at the bill.

TERRY
(unbelieving)
What the hell is going on?

CLOSE UP: THE BILL

"$15, 726.84".

BACK TO SCENE

She walks across to a cork notice board and pins the bill up beside a LINE OF OTHERS, the telephone company, Mastercard, Visa, a gas card, each of them with the sum owing circled in red, each of them well over $20,000.

CUT TO:

INT. TERRY'S BEDROOM -- LATER

Terry checks herself in front of her bedroom mirror -- she's dressed for a night on the town but something about her dress doesn't work for her.

INT. JOSH'S BEDROOM -- SAME

The PNEUMATIC YOUNG WOMAN gazes out from the screen of Josh's computer, topless now.

PLAYMATE
If you would like me to take off
my skirt, please touch my ass.

Josh grins back at the screen when suddenly there's a KNOCK at the door. He immediately slams the drawer with the modem closed and flicks off the PC.

TERRY OS
Josh, can I come in?

JOSH
Sure, Mom...

He jumps onto the bed and starts fooling around with Axl. Terry glances round the room but spots nothing too glaringly suspicious. Josh grins innocently back at her.

TERRY
(beat)
Do I look okay, do you think?

Josh flicks his eyes heavenward.

JOSH
For whatever dweeb you're seeing tonight, Mom, you look just fine.

Terry sits down on his bed and gazes across at him.

TERRY
His name is Elliot, and he'd really like us all to go out together sometime.

Josh throws himself back on his bed.

JOSH
I'd rather shoot myself.

Terry sighs.

TERRY
I know it isn't easy, Josh, but we can only make this work if we both try.

Josh looks back at her, relenting a little. A beat.

JOSH
Yeah, well...you're not back by ten you're gonna have a lot of explaining to do.

As Terry smiles, we...

CUT TO:

EXT. TERRY'S HOUSE -- LATER

Terry pulls out of the driveway and away down the street.

INT. JOSH'S BEDROOM -- SAME

Josh watches her go, then pulls on his Raiders jacket and taps out a number on the phone.

JOSH
Fraze? Yeah, she's gone -- I'll see you at the mall in fifteen.

CUT TO:

INT. CONSUMER REPORTS OFFICES -- NIGHT

Terry walks into the open-plan editorial space, mostly empty now except for a few late workers. She stops by a woman at a nearby desk.

TERRY
Excuse me, I'm looking for Elliot Miller.

WOMAN
Office at the far end.

ANGLE: THE FAR OFFICE

and sitting in front of his PC

ELLIOT MILLER

an attractive though slightly earnest-looking man in jeans and a polo shirt. He gets up as Terry walks in.

ELLIOT
Terry, hi...

He leans over and kisses her suavely on the cheek.

ELLIOT
You find the office okay?

TERRY
No problem.

ELLIOT
Listen I really appreciate you meeting me here, just that I had to get this report finished -- "Toys that Kill for the Under Fives".

TERRY
Aren't too many, I hope.

ELLIOT
Oh God, there are hundreds, new batch arrives every month...here, see this doll.

He pulls across one of a series of TOYS scattered across the office.

ELLIOT
Cries when you take her pacifier out, wets her diaper when you push her tummy in...

Suddenly, violently, Elliot TEARS THE DOLL'S HEAD OFF, revealing the sharp metal spike underneath.

ELLIOT
...and skewers your kid's eye out the moment your back's turned.

TERRY
That's terrible...

ELLIOT
Nothing compared with Bobby the Bunny.

TERRY
Bobby the Bunny?

He picks up a small furry RABBIT, opening a flap in its belly.

ELLIOT
Batteries go in here, when you turn him on he wiggles his nose, and hops along the floor.

Elliot turns the rabbit on and he begins to hop sweetly across the office.

TERRY
You're not going to pull his head off too...

ELLIOT
Be dead if I did -- take a look.

He bends down and pours a cup of water onto the floor in the rabbit's path. The moment its paw touches the moisture

THE ENTIRE RABBIT EXPLODES

Elliot douses it with a hand-held fire extinguisher, then looks at Terry.

ELLIOT
You believe that?

Terry takes in Elliot's fascinated face.

TERRY
I guess you really love your job, Elliot.

ELLIOT
Good thing too, 'cos I'll tell you something, Terry -- more people die from accidents in their own homes every day than in a week on the streets of the most dangerous city in the US.

He pulls on his coat then puts his arm round Terry's shoulders.

ELLIOT
(smiles)
But don't you worry -- I know the safest restaurant in town.

CUT TO:

INT. COMPUTER ROOM -- NIGHT

Bram is still at work. He's slumped at one of the mainframe's monitors, fast asleep, the desk in front of him surrounded by paper and copies of the program reports.

A small portable radio is PLAYING on top of the middle monitor.

DJ VO
Right now it's nine-forty-five p.m., it's seventy-two degrees, and this is the late show...

The Angels fade in SINGING "My Boyfriend's Back".

CLOSE UP: THE SPEAKERS

the wall of sound WAILING is enough to wake the dead.

Suddenly the central monitor flickers and goes to static. A beat. Then it clears and a list of names slowly scrolls up, followed by their telephone numbers.

IT'S TERRY'S ADDRESS BOOK

As the Angels reach a TINNY crescendo, Terry's name scrolls slowly up into the center of the screen.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERRY'S HOUSE -- SAME

Suddenly the phone begins to RING in the darkened house. A beat. Then the answering machine picks up.

TERRY VO

Hi, I'm not here right now, but
please leave a message and we'll
get right back to you.

INT. HOUSE -- SAME

The beeps finish and suddenly

AN ELECTRONIC CACOPHONY

screeches from the phone, a computer trying to make a connection. There's no response and the line goes dead. As we gradually...

SLIDE THROUGH THE DARKENED HOUSE

and into the GARAGE.

INT. GARAGE -- SAME

The alarm unit sits on the wall at the far end as suddenly there's the sound of CIRCUITS CLICKING inside.

INT. JOSH'S BEDROOM

The phone hidden in Josh's drawer begins to RING.

CLOSE UP: THE PHONE

as the same ELECTRONIC NOISE filters out then

THE MODEM

in the drawer above PICKS UP and suddenly

THE SCREEN OF JOSH'S PC

flicks on.

INT. COMPUTER

A laser graphic of the house slowly rotates, gradually becoming more detailed until the ENTIRE WIRING SYSTEM is displayed in front of us.

EXT. HOUSE

One by one the lights in each room are flicked on then off.

INT. HALLWAY

Axl, Josh's dog, turns and stares at the winking lights.

EXT. YARD

Agitated, he runs out and stops by the pool, sniffing the air.

THE YARD LIGHTS

suddenly flash on, one after the other. The dog starts pacing frantically up and down.

A SPRINKLER HEAD

suddenly shoots out of the ground next to its paw and starts spraying water. The dog YELPS with surprise.

OTHER HEADS spring into life all over the yard, raining water down. Axl backs away towards the pool. As he reaches the edge the water starts to BUBBLE and FOAM as the filter system thrashes into overdrive, and then, snaking across the surface towards him, pulling its long hose behind it, comes the sinister, reptilian shape of the POOL CLEANER.

CUT TO:

INT. MALL VIDEO GAME ARCADE -- LATER

Frazer stands beside the bucking black cockpit of a game called "Afterburner" as Josh puts it through its paces.

ANGLE: THE SCREEN

as Josh twists the wheel from side to side as he NAPALMS the forest below, FIRES his missiles at the plane ahead, then CLIMBS STEEPLY to avoid the incoming anti-aircraft fire.

Suddenly the machine cuts off, the MUSIC announcing the end of the game, as on the screen it displays its HIGHEST SCORE GRAPHIC and invites Josh to tap in his initials at NUMBER THREE.

CLOSE UP: THE SCREEN

as he taps in J - M - M. And as we PULL BACK we see we're...

INT. COMPUTER PLANT -- SAME

...looking at the screen in front of the still sleeping Bram, as the computer highlights Josh's initials then compares them to Terry's...T - A - M.

No match.

Bram slowly wakes up as JOSH'S NAME is printed out on the screen...JOSHUA MICHAEL MUNROE, and his initials are highlighted...J - M - M.

Bram immediately snatches up the phone.

BRAM
Security...yeah, it's Walker, system manager...I want a check run on every user accessing the mainframe right now...'cos we got an unauthorized operator, asshole, and I want to know who the hell he is!

CUT TO:

INT. MALL VIDEO ARCADE -- SAME

Josh still hasn't got out of the machine.

FRAZER
No way, Josh, it's my turn!

JOSH
Way, Fraze, I can toast this sucker...

He loads in another 50 cents and the machine immediately FLICKERS into life.

FRAZER
(shakes his head)
You're unreal, man.

INT. COMPUTER PLANT -- MINUTES LATER

The security guard is talking to Bram by his terminal.

GUARD
I'm sorry, Mr Walker, but he's using your password.

Bram stares at him.

BRAM
My password?

The guard glances down at his notebook.

GUARD
"Blow me", right?

Bram's a little embarrassed at this.

BRAM
Uh...yeah.

GUARD
That's how he got in.

BRAM
So are you tracing his call?

GUARD
Can't do that, phone company won't
authorize a trace without a
warrant.

But Bram isn't listening, he's staring at his screen.

BRAM
What the hell is he doing?

"AFTERBURNER" is now flashing across the monitor.

INT. MALL VIDEO ARCADE -- SAME

Frazer steps back as the black cockpit suddenly LURCHES and JUMPS so violently the whole base shifts.

FRAZER
Slow down, man, you're freaking
the machine out.

INT. COCKPIT.

Josh is gripping onto the controls for dear life as they buck and twist in his hands, his seat SLAMMING from side to side as on the screen the game goes FASTER and FASTER.

JOSH
(shouts back)
I'm not doing it! It's running
itself!

INT. VIDEO ARCADE

Other kids stop and stare as the black machine winds itself up into what looks like being an EXPLOSIVE CRESCENDO, its base lurching across the floor with each juddering movement of Josh's cockpit.

FRAZER
It's out of control!
(turning to the
crowd)
Somebody get the manager!

ANGLE: JOSH

at the eye of the mechanical storm, spinning and twisting in front of us, like an astronaut undergoing violent G-force tests.

CLOSE UP: THE SCREEN

as we move closer and closer to the enemy plane flying ahead of us, and suddenly the pilot turns and grins at us...

WITH THE FACE OF THE KILLER

Josh stares back at it, then...

A CABLE

is suddenly pulled from a wall socket.

THE MACHINE

immediately begins to wind down as its power is cut.

ANGLE: THE ARCADE MANAGER

as he walks bad-temperedly across to Josh.

MANAGER
The hell're you doing with my
machine?

Josh slowly pulls himself from the Afterburner cockpit, holding onto the side while he waits for his balance to return.

MANAGER
You hear me? What did you do?

Josh looks dreamily up at him.

JOSH
Damned if I know, man...but I tell
you something, I ever work it out
I'm doing it again 'cos that was
the best goddam ride I ever had!

CUT TO:

INT. TERRY'S HOUSE -- LATER

Josh lets himself in the front door and looks about for Axl when he doesn't come running to meet him.

JOSH
Axl! Here, boy!

There's no sign of him. Josh frowns then goes upstairs.

EXT. YARD -- SAME

Josh walks across to the pool, wearing swimming shorts now, and immediately notices the wet grass beneath his feet.

JOSH
Axl!

There's still no sign of him. Josh glances across at the pool.

JOSH
Who closed the cover?

The hard plastic sheet is now stretched out over the water. He goes over to the control box and flicks a switch -- slowly the cover retracts, revealing more and more of the chlorine blue water. Finally it slides off completely. There's still no sign of Axl.

Josh looks round once more then DIVES into the pool.

JOSH'S POV: UNDER THE WATER

as he swims through the eery light of the pool, silent, other-worldly, not seeing the SHADOW gradually growing behind him until suddenly he spins round revealing

THE DROWNED CORPSE OF HIS DOG

the pool cleaner's HOSE twisted around his body, floating horribly in the water at the far end.

CUT TO:

INT. TERRY'S GARAGE -- NEXT DAY

Terry's standing by the partially melted alarm unit talking to a uniform SECURITY MAN with a badge that reads CASTLE HOME PROTECTION.

TERRY
So what are you saying? My alarm system closed the pool cover? Turned on the sprinklers?

SECURITY MAN
It's a possibility, Mrs Munroe -- your alarm's connected to our central computer through the phone line, when your son messed with the connection it's just possible something shorted out, yard got turned on by mistake.

Terry looks away, shaking her head.

TERRY
Yeah, well I want someone to come by tomorrow, rip the whole system out -- I want a regular alarm, with a bell or something, no computers, no phone lines, you understand me?

INT. JOSH'S BEDROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Josh is lying glumly on his bed as Terry KNOCKS and walks in. She goes across and sits down beside him.

TERRY
So how're you feeling?

JOSH
(shrugs)
Okay...

Terry looks down at him.

TERRY
I dunno, Josh, sometimes I feel all I ever do these days is shout at you.

Josh looks up at her.

JOSH
It was my fault, wasn't it?

TERRY
Axl was an accident, the alarm was your fault...

Sadly he nods.

JOSH
(beat)
Sorry, Mom.

Terry half-smiles then reaches out and squeezes his arm.

TERRY
Come on, let's go get those sneakers you wanted for Florida.

EXT. TERRY'S HOUSE -- SAME

As they walk across the driveway, BRAM'S CAR clunks to a halt by the sidewalk, and he climbs out and walks across to them.

He smiles a crumpled smile.

BRAM
Sorry to bother you, Mrs Munroe, name's Walker.

He hands her a card.

BRAM
I work for a computer company called Softec.

Terry looks back at him.

TERRY
Oh yeah? Well, I hate computers, Mr...
(glances at the card)
...Walker -- so I don't think we've got anything to talk about, do we?

Josh takes the card as Terry walks on towards the car.

BRAM
(going after her)
Not even all the problems you've been having with them the last couple of weeks?

Terry stops and looks back at him.

BRAM
Crazy bills, ton of junk mail, strange messages...

TERRY
(beat)
How do you know that?

BRAM
I run a mainframe computer, and your name keeps...well, turning up --

JOSH
Wait a minute, Mom, I've read about this guy...
(to Bram)
You got that Herpex virus into the IRS mainframe, right? Sent a two hundred dollar tax rebate to half the residents of Rhode Island.

BRAM
Was a long time ago.

JOSH
Oh, yeah, you've been in jail, right?

BRAM
Hey, kid, you're not helping me here.

TERRY
Joshua, get in the car, please.

BRAM
It was a very short sentence, Mrs Munroe, in a country club jail, really no need to...

TERRY
It seems to me, Mister Walker, that if my name is turning up on your computer, it's about time you did something about it.

She glares at him a moment longer, then turns and marches across to her car, SLAMS the door, then pulls away.

BRAM
(beat)
Right. Thanks for your help, I'll, uh...make sure and keep you informed.

CUT TO:

INT. MALL SHOE STORE -- LATER

Josh is wearing a BRAND NEW PAIR OF HI-TOPS, checking them out in the mirror as Terry pays the cashier.

SALESMAN
Will that be cash or charge, ma'am?

TERRY
Charge, please...

ANGLE: THE CASH TILL

Terry hands her Visa card to the cashier who takes it and runs it through the magnetic ID strip.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM -- SAME

The reels of tape suddenly begin to spin again.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP: TO A COMPUTER SCREEN

The digits of Terry's card flick up one after the other -- followed by her name and then the sales point location...

INT. MALL SHOE STORE

As Terry and Josh walk out of the store a SECURITY CAMERA high up on a nearby wall tracks slowly round and focuses on them.

THROUGH A BLACK AND WHITE FISH EYE LENS

WE SEE them walking towards the elevators.

INT. ELEVATOR -- LOBBY

Terry glances at the security camera high up on the wall and then back at the door.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT

The elevator is right at the bottom of the shaft.

INT. ELEVATOR

A crowd of passengers are about to climb in when the doors SLAM SHUT. A beat.

The power in the elevator surges, the lights flaring bright white. Suddenly the barely audible musak GOES DEAD.

A long beat.

Then the Chiffons BLAST "Sweet Talking Guy" from the tinny speakers as the elevator...

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT

...cannons up to Terry's level, its runners SPARKING against the rails, the car banging from side to side.

INT. CORRIDOR

The bell RINGS as the elevator arrives.

Terry and Josh watch as the door slides smoothly open. The Chiffons have stopped now and the soft musak WAFTS OUT again. The lights are low and normal. A beat.

INT. ELEVATOR

As they walk inside, Terry glances back up at the security camera. Suddenly she knows something doesn't feel right. As the doors begin to SWING SHUT she holds out her arm and stops them.

TERRY

Let's walk.

She eyes the elevator as they step out.

At the far end of the corridor a line of escalators lead down to the lower level. Josh steps onto the first escalator and they start slowly gliding down to the area below.

The laces of Josh's hi-tops, left rakishly untied, lie, temptingly, across the steel steps.

Suddenly the plates between the two steps slip several inches, and then, as Josh's foot slides down, snap back up again.

JOSH

(alarmed)

Mom!

Terry looks down.

TERRY

(panics)

Oh Jesus...

She tries to pull him free but his foot is caught too firmly.

At the bottom of the escalator the metal steps fold away one after the other, relentlessly taking Josh toward the grill of steel teeth that jut out of the floor.

Josh grips the rail as Terry tugs on his foot.

TERRY

Somebody help!

Startled shoppers look at her. They're getting closer and closer to the bottom. Terry looks frantically back up to the top of the escalator. Then she sees the EMERGENCY STOP BUTTON.

She starts to run back up the escalator, stumbling and being pulled constantly back by the steps' downward motion.

Josh begins to YELL, just feet from the grill.

Terry stretches out with her hand and THUMPS the button. Stop. Thank God. The staircase has stopped just in time.

Josh smiles with relief up at his mother.

INT. ESCALATOR CASING -- SAME

Suddenly the gears begin to GRIND again...

INT. MALL

...and the stairs start moving once more.

CLOSE UP: JOSH

as he's tugged towards the metal grill until suddenly...

A HAND

grabs him by the shoulder and pulls him free. The shoe left trapped between the steps is sucked into the grill.

WIDER -- A LARGE SECURITY OFFICER

helps Josh to his feet.

CUT TO:

INT. MALL PHONE BOOTH -- LATER

Terry's on the phone.

TERRY
Listen, Frank, about tonight...I'm really sorry, I'm not going to be able to make it.

INT. FRANK'S KITCHEN

Frank leans back against the work surface.

FRANK
(resigned)
You're gonna stand me up, huh?

Two frozen TV dinners stand beside the microwave.

FRANK
Hey, no problem, we'll do it some other time -- I've got a bunch of work to catch up on anyway.
(beat)
Okay, I'll see you tomorrow.

He hangs up, sighs, then slides one of the dinners back into the fridge besides the scores of others, all neatly alphabetized. The other he pushes into the microwave and flicks on.

Then he walks back into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Frank goes across to his desk, flicks on his PC then takes the phone and slots it into a modem. He taps a series of instructions into the keyboard -- the contact clicks, he's on line -- ticket sales begin scrolling past in front of him.

As he begins to work WE MOVE CLOSER AND CLOSER to the monitor, until the neon amber figures fill the screen, and suddenly...

WE SLIP RIGHT THROUGH THEM

...find ourselves looking up at them from inside the monitor, all in reverse now, Frank's face, working unsuspectingly in front of them.

And as we turn back to face the fiber-optic tunnels running into the city's electrical and telephone systems, like some vast subway intersection, we hear A FAINT NOISE somewhere in the distance.

AND THEN A BURST OF WHITE LIGHT

flashes past us, filling the inside of the monitor.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Frank flinches as the screen whites out, and then gradually clears, leaving a chaos of figures.

FRANK
Aaaahh shit!!

He tries tapping on the keys but the board's locked him out.

FRANK
(pleading)
Come on, don't do this to me.

He taps some more, then he pulls out his DOS manual, flicks through, then starts trying to follow a set of escape instructions. Still nothing. Frank stares at the monitor for a moment, then thumps it with the palm of his hand.

The screen clears and goes back to normal.

Frank grins triumphantly, jabbing a finger at the screen.

FRANK
Don't fuck with Frankie.

INT. MONITOR

Frank's fleshy face grins on the far side of the screen. Somewhere, someone gets very pissed off.

INT. APARTMENT

And gradually WE MOVE THROUGH the apartment, as Frank goes back to his work, except that now we know there's something there. Finally WE REACH the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

WE MOVE CLOSER AND CLOSER TO the microwave.

Through the glass door the TV dinner begins to bubble and cook.

Suddenly the microwave's timer flicks to zero, but the door doesn't open, and the machine doesn't switch off. In fact, now that we're right up close, we can hear that the HUMMING is becoming more intense.

The TV dinner begins to blacken as heat waves shimmer inside the oven.

A GOB OF BLACK PLASTIC

drips from the microwave's cable down onto the work surface. The whole thing is beginning to melt.

And as the humming becomes an ALMOST INAUDIBLE WHINE, the door flicks open and the heat waves pour into the kitchen. Still the machine doesn't flick off.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Frank glances at his watch then sniffs the air, gets up and walks over to the kitchen.

He pushes open the door.

INT. KITCHEN

His vision is distorted by the shimmering heat waves.

Sweat immediately breaks out on his forehead. He stares at the microwave.

The electric cable is dripping onto a gradually spreading pool of molten plastic.

In the microwave the TV dinner is now scorched black and turning molten red at the edges.

In the fruit basket on the kitchen bar a bunch of grapes turn into raisins as he watches, and the bloated skin of a banana splits open as the fruit inside boils out.

Frank reaches towards the microwave, trying to turn it off, but his vision becomes more blurred.

A bottle of Fleischmans EXPLODES by the sink, spraying steaming oil all over the floor.

Frank's breathing becomes ragged. He puts his hand to his temple, and half-turns, hoping to make it to the door, but the heat overwhelms him.

As he passes out, and falls to the floor, his head strikes the edge of the refrigerator.

He lies unconscious on the floor, blood oozing from his forehead. Gradually it begins to boil.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Glowing on the screen of his PC is the page from Terry's address book. As we watch, FRANK'S NAME is suddenly deleted by the cursor.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A morning mist swirls through the long lines of gravestones. In the distance a modern white chapel stands silhouetted against the sky.

The SOUND of hymns floats out across the mist.

INT. CHAPEL

The pews are filled with Frank's family and friends. Terry and Josh, both dressed in black, stand at the front.

Frank's coffin, wreathed in flowers, stands beside the altar on a set of concealed rollers. The hymn comes to an end.

The PRIEST steps up to the pulpit. A beat.

PRIEST
And so we commit Frank's body to
the love and grace Jesus Christ,
Our Lord.

He reaches under the pulpit and presses a red button.

PRIEST
Amen.

And as the organ begins to PLAY again, the coffin jerks, then slides back past the altar. Two red velvet curtains draw back as it slides into the crematorium.

INT. OVEN

The coffin slides to a halt in the metal chamber.

The heat register on the wall slowly climbs upwards. Suddenly bright orange flames fire up from the lines of gas outlets that cover the oven, engulfing the coffin in flame.

INT. CHAPEL

As the piped organ music plays, Terry glances around for a moment and sees Bram seated at the back of the church. A puzzled look flicks across her face.

INT. OVEN

The coffin is charred and black now, smoke billowing out from beneath the flames. Suddenly there's a heavenly BLAST of trumpets and Lesley Gore begins to WAIL, "It's My Party."

Frank burns on for several beats.

INT. CHAPEL

The velvet curtains suddenly snap back and the mournful music is DROWNED OUT by the Phil Spector sound. The whole congregation turns and stares.

FRANK'S COFFIN

is suddenly spat out from the flames. It hurtles down the metal rollers, flames and smoke billowing up around the altar.

Terry begins to SCREAM as the coffin slams into the stop at the end of the rollers, bounces up into the air, the lid falling off to one side and then...

FRANK'S HALF BURNT CORPSE

hurls through the air towards Terry and Josh.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Terry leaps up from her bedclothes, her face running with sweat, taking great gulps of air. It takes her a moment to realize it was only a dream.

She climbs out of the bed and walks across to the window, parting the drapes.

Dawn is breaking along a beautiful sandy beach.

Terry takes a breath and smiles.

INT. TAMPA AIRPORT -- DAY

Terry's talking on a payphone by their departure gate as Josh sits across from her, eyeballing a GOOD-LOOKING FLIGHT ATTENDANT.

TERRY
(on the phone)
No, Mom, I didn't meet anybody...because I wasn't trying to meet anybody...listen, Mom, I gotta go, it's flight 73...to National, right...okay, we'll see you at four-thirty.

CUT TO:

CLOSEUP TO A SCREEN

the figures "4:30" are printed out...

MOM OS
Say hi to Josh for me, sweetheart.

Then the line CLICKS and goes dead.

Suddenly all the 4:30 flight arrivals at Washington's National airport are printed out beside it.

The cursor flicks down the list until it finds flight 73 from Tampa. The screen clears and the words:

"FLIGHT 73"

are printed out at the top left-hand corner. Beneath them:

"CHECKING"

winks on and off. A beat.

Suddenly the screen is filled with the names of all checked-in passengers on the flight. They scroll slowly up the screen until the cursor finds Terry's name. A beat. Then the whole screen goes blank.

EXT. SKY - LATER

Flight 73 from Tampa slips by at 30,000 feet.

INT. PLANE

Terry and Josh are sitting near the front of the cabin, Josh hammering away at his GAMEBOY. Terry looks rather tense.

JOSH
Relax, Mom, we'll be landing soon.

TERRY
(brave smile)
That's the part I hate most.

INT. COCKPIT

The crew are preparing for their descent. The voice of an air traffic controller CRACKLES over the radio.

CONTROLLER
(voice over)
This is National control, 73, we have you on screen. Start your descent to 23,5.

CAPTAIN
Roger, control, descending 23,5.

INT. NATIONAL AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Banks of controllers are hunched over their darkened radar screens.

CLOSEUP TO ONE OF THE RADARS

A small neon triangle marked 73 moves slowly onto the screen.

A well-regulated pattern of similar dots, all marked with different flight numbers, are spaced out all around it.

The CONTROLLER flicks on his mike.

CONTROLLER
73, you have clearance to descend to 15.

CAPTAIN
(voice over)
Roger, control.

CLOSEUP TO THE RADAR AGAIN

A new blip appears, an unmarked blip, right behind 73, and moving much faster.

CONTROLLER
Where did that come from?

He looks over at the SUPERVISOR standing behind the line of controllers.

CONTROLLER
I've got an unidentified aircraft in vector seven.

The man comes over to his screen as the Controller tries to make contact.

CONTROLLER
Unidentified aircraft bearing 1125, you are in violation of controlled airspace, please respond immediately.

The blip just keeps closing on flight 73. The Controller opens the channel for a response but there's just the HUM of static. He and the Supervisor exchange a tense glance.

CONTROLLER
(more urgent)
Unidentified aircraft, please respond.

The Supervisor pulls on a headset.

SUPERVISOR
73, this is National control, we have an emergency situation, bank right and descend immediately to 12.

INT. CABIN - FLIGHT 73

Passengers SCREAM as the plane banks and dives, the airframe shuddering. A stewardess's cart breaks loose and careers down the aisle past Terry, who clutches her armrest, too scared to scream.

INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

The two men watch on the screen as 73 moves off to the right and the unmarked blip passes harmlessly beneath it.

Suddenly another unmarked blip appears, directly in front of 73, at its new height.

SUPERVISOR
(into the mike)
73, CLIMB, CLIMB!!!

INT. CABIN

As the plane rears up, the engines SCREAMING, the cabin lights winking on and off, baggage tumbles out of the overhead lockers and the passengers are rammed back in their seats.

INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

The new blip passes harmlessly beneath 73.

SUPERVISOR
73, 73, will you respond.

INT. COCKPIT

Red lights and warning alarms are going off all over the cockpit. The heavily sweating crew are wrestling with their controls. The CAPTAIN flicks open his mike.

CAPTAIN
(losing it)
What the fuck do you guys think
this is, an airport movie?!?

INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

CONTROLLER
Everything's clear now, 73...

He glances at the screen as the mystery blip disappears off the edge.

CONTROLLER
I'll bring you right in.

As he speaks, one of the blips reappears on the far side of the screen, larger, rounder now, and suddenly it begins to look very familiar.

CONTROLLER
Oh no...

The blip opens its jaw.

CONTROLLER
...it's Pacman.

Pacman begins to race around the radar screen, eating up all the descending aircraft.

CONTROLLER
(shouting)
I'VE GOT SOME KIND OF COMPUTER
ERROR, SOMEBODY GET ME OUT!!!

But his shout is drowned out by a cacophony of electronic blips and beats.

Every screen along the aisle of controllers has been cleared and replaced by a video game, COMMANDO, PHOENIX, SKYHAWK, ROAD WARRIOR.

INT. COCKPIT

The crew grit their teeth as they approach the runway.

CAPTAIN
(to the co-pilot)
Dump the fuel, we're gonna have to
go in blind.

EXT. SKY

The lights of all the approaching aircraft, stacking up as they try to maneuver their way out of the crisis, stretch back into the late afternoon sky.

Over the picture, the radio channels ARE GOING CRAZY as all the crews desperately try to make contact with each other and air traffic control.

INT. CABIN

Terry is hugging Josh, sobbing.

EXT. RUNWAY

The 757 THUMPS down onto the cement.

INT. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL - LATER

The crisis has passed now, the screens have been cleared of the video games, and technicians and controllers are pouring over the computer blocks, trying to establish what went wrong.

One of them pulls a long circuit board out of a processing unit. It's still smoking, all the silicon and plastic fused into a molten mass.

CUT TO:

INT. TERRY'S HOUSE -- LATER

Terry's sitting on the couch. It's late, Josh must be in bed and almost all the lights are off. Terry takes a sip from her drink, then stands up ready for bed.

She glances at the TV as she picks up the remote to flick it off.

THE LATE NIGHT NEWS is running a report on the incident at the airport.

NEWSCASTER

A major investigation is now under way into the failure of the air-traffic control computers at National Airport today. FAA officials are currently blaming an unknown hacker who they believe crashed the system...

Terry flips off the TV and as she stands up notices the PILE OF MAIL that her Mom must have stacked on the table during their vacation.

ANGLE: A SMALL PARCEL

with the letters FBI printed across the top.

Terry gingerly opens it, revealing her CHARRED ADDRESS BOOK, the one stolen by the killer. She shudders as she stares down at it.

INT. JOSH'S BEDROOM

The PC suddenly snaps on, its light glowing eerily in the darkened room.

ANGLE: THE SCREENSAVER

of SWIMMING FISH is suddenly replaced by a vaguely sinister one of SHARKS chasing BIKINI-CLAD WOMEN.

CLOSE UP: ONE OF THE WOMEN

she looks exactly like Terry. As she swims frantically towards the edge of the screen she's suddenly SNAPPED UP by a shark coming in the opposite direction.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Terry suddenly starts, dropping the address book as the phone RINGS. She collects herself then turns and answers it.

COMPUTER VO

Your number has been randomly selected for this computer generated survey by the State Farm Insurance Company of Virginia.

Terry hangs up, flicks off the single light and goes upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM -- MINUTES LATER

As Terry slips on her nightdress the phone RINGS again.

TERRY
(tired)
God.

She answers it again.

COMPUTER VO
Would you like to cut your auto insurance by forty percent? Please answer after the beep.

TERRY
Up yours.

She hangs up and walks into the bathroom. A beat.

The telephone RINGS once again.

Terry looks out of the bathroom, really irritated now, goes across to the phone and picks it up.

COMPUTER VO
Did you know that State Farm offers a free, no obligation insurance assessment, regardless of your driving record?

The beep goes again.

TERRY
How the fuck do you expect to get customers by calling them in the middle of the night?

COMPUTER VO
Thank you for your response.

She's about to drop the phone back onto its cradle...

COMPUTER VO
Wait a moment, please, Terry.

Terry freezes. A beat. Slowly, gingerly, she brings the phone back to her ear.

TERRY
(shaken)
Who is this?

A beat.

COMPUTER VO
Did you know I stole your address book?

Terry is rooted to the spot, unable to hang up.

CLICK! The phone goes dead.

She drops the receiver as tears begin to well up in her eyes.

INT. JOSH'S BEDROOM -- SAME

On the PC the page from Terry's address book scrolls up onto the screen, the cursor highlighting the next name on the list --

ELLIOTT MILLER

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY BASKETBALL COURTS -- DAY

Bram and Josh are playing one on one. It's a hot afternoon and the rest of the courts are deserted as Josh runs rings round his older, heavily sweating, opponent.

JOSH
I know what you're thinking...

Josh faints to the left, then pulls back as Bram clumsily tries to steal.

JOSH
You're thinking, he's just a kid?
The hell does he know...

He suddenly cuts past Bram who loses his balance and falls butt first onto the concrete as Josh shoots and scores.

JOSH
But I've thought about this,
man...and I've, like, got it aced.

BRAM
Do you ever shut up?

JOSH
Only when I've got real
competition...

Bram grits his teeth and grabs the ball.

BRAM
Get over there.

JOSH
Is the rumor true you got fifty
grand out of the IRS before they
changed their passwords?

Bram feints and goes right, but Josh smacks the ball out of his hands, controls it, and dumps in another two points.

Bram stares sourly across at him.

BRAM
You want to know the truth, kid? I'll tell you the truth...I didn't make penny one out of that IRS deal...I didn't even set up the goddam virus...

Josh stares back at him.

BRAM
All I was trying to do was get myself a tax rebate, but my program backfired, ended up bringing Christmas to Rhode Island three months early...

JOSH
You're kidding me...

BRAM
Only thing I got was six months in jail, okay? I'm no hero.

He goes across to his car, pulled up by the courts, grabs a towel and a beer from his cooler and takes a deep pull. As he finishes, Josh grabs it and takes a pull himself.

JOSH
You're no basketball player either, but you're still my Mom's best shot.

Bram grabs the beer back.

BRAM
She know you're here?

JOSH
No way, she'd flip, haven't even told her my theory...

To finish his recovery Bram lights a cigarette and leans back against the car.

JOSH
I'm telling you, man, it makes perfect sense -- the dead guy was offing names from peoples' address books, was in all the papers -- and so was my Mom's name, fact that she was the next victim.

BRAM
So?

JOSH
So s'posing some computer nerd psycho reads about it in one of the papers; he gets like a sick kick out of what the dead guy was doing, right? So he decides to finish the job --

Bram gazes down at him.

JOSH
Stick with me, Bram, I'll make you famous again.

CUT TO:

INT. CONSUMER REPORTS OFFICE -- DAY

The phone in Elliot's office begins to ring. The VOICE MAIL cuts in.

ELLIOT
(voice over)
Hi, you've reached Elliot Miller's voice mail - press one if you want to leave a message on my machine, press two if you want your call forwarded to me at the lab, press three if you want to go back to the switchboard, press four...

Suddenly a TONE is entered and then...

UP CLOSE TO THE PHONE

we hear the telltale ELECTRONIC CACOPHONY filtering from the receiver.

ANGLE: ELLIOT'S PC

as the screen suddenly SNAPS ON.

INT. WAREHOUSE -- SAME

In the warehouse-like space across from the line of offices ANOTHER CAR is being prepared for a test crash into the wall.

INT. CAR

Elliot is crouched on the floor in the back of the car, fitting cluster of sensors to one of the FOUR TEST DUMMIES strapped inside.

INT. LAB

By the side of the track a group of TECHNICIANS are gathered round a MONITOR watching a playback of the previous crash, the tape playing FRAME BY FRAME, the dummies' arms and legs exploding forwards as the car hits the wall and the seat belts bite.

TECHNICIAN 1
(pointing at the
screen)
So I guess this'd be the crumple
zone giving way right here...

TECHNICIAN 2
Crumple zone, my ass, only thing's
gonna be crumpled in that car's
the driver's legs...
(looks up)
Hey, Elliot, you ready yet?

In the car Elliot half-turns and glances back out the still-open rear door.

ELLIOT
Another couple of minutes.

TECHNICIAN 2
(to his partner)
Let's bring up the monitoring
program.

He taps a command into the keyboard of one of the bank of computers.

TECHNICIAN 2
Who set the release mechanism to
auto?

BENEATH THE CAR

The HUGE BOLT that holds the car in place on the industrial catapult suddenly SLIPS DOWN a few inches.

THE CAR

jerks forward, then stops.

INT. CAR

Elliot twists round, still half in and half out of the back door.

ELLIOT
Hey, cut that out, it's not funny!

The first technician taps another command into the computer.

TECHNICIAN 1
It's locked me out...

ANGLE: BENEATH THE CAR

as the bolt SNAPS DOWN, releasing the steam catapult.

THE TWO TECHNICIANS

turn and stare as

THE CAR

explodes down the track, Elliot still caught half in and out of the back door.

INT. CAR

Elliot SCREAMS as through the windshield the wall HURTLES towards them then...

THE CAR SLAMS INTO THE WALL

the windshield shattering, metal screaming, tires blowing out, the image DOUBLING and TREBLING up as it's played out across EACH OF THE MONITORS, some running at full speed, others in slow motion.

Finally the carnage settles. The wrecked car sits crumpled against the wall, Elliot's legs still protruding, unmoving, from the back.

The technicians run across to pull Elliot from the wreck, but as they reach the car he suddenly PRIES HIMSELF FREE.

ANGLE: ELLIOT

a couple of scratches, the odd bruise, but basically, miraculously, unhurt.

ELLIOT
(incensed)
I dunno whose insane idea of a joke that was, but I tell you something, when I find out I'm gonna sue his ass!

The technicians stare back at him as he turns and marches out of the lab.

INT. WASHROOM -- SAME

Elliot stares at himself in the mirror, trying to calm down as he runs some water into one of the sinks, then he bends down and splashes it onto his face. He glances back in the mirror then twists across the funnel of the HOT AIR BLOWER and pushes the button...

A SHEET OF FLAME

explodes from the blower, incinerating Elliot's head in a terrible fireball.

INT. ELLIOT'S OFFICE -- SAME

The scanned page from Terry's address book is now glowing from the screen of his PC. As we watch Elliot's name is deleted by the cursor.

CUT TO:

INT. FRAZER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is larger than Josh's and much neater. The bed is made and the clothes put away. Josh and Frazer are arguing by the door.

JOSH
C'mon, man, it'll be great.

FRAZER
I can't, Josh.

JOSH
Gimme one good reason why not...

FRAZER
I gotta look after my sister.

JOSH
We'll take her too, girls love malls.

FRAZER
She's eighteen months old.

JOSH
I know, man, we'll use that carrying thing.

FRAZER
(shakes his head)
I can't sneak out, not tonight.

JOSH
I promise your Mom will never find out.

FRAZER
You don't understand.

JOSH
What's there to understand?

FRAZER'S MOM OS
Frazer, the baby-sitter's here!

Josh stares at him. A beat.

JOSH
Baby-sitter...?

Frazer sighs and looks away.

JOSH
That is so humiliating...

FRAZER
It's your fault -- she's only here because I snuck out with you last time.

JOSH
(shakes his head)
Baby-sitter...

He glances out the window. Suddenly his eyes widen.

JOSH
Oh my god...

FRAZER
What is it?

JOSH
(aghast)
It's Carol Mason.

INT. HALLWAY

Carol, looking, if possible, even more gorgeous than before, stands in the hallway holding Frazer's BABY SISTER as his mother, a GOOD LOOKING WOMAN in her thirties, stands in the doorway.

MOM
And if you need another bottle,
there's one made up in the fridge.

JOSH
We'll show her around.

MOM
Oh and I left the number by the
phone...

FRAZER
Great, we'll take care of it.

He pushes her through the door.

MOM
You'll behave won't you, sweetie?

FRAZER
Mom, just go -- please...

She looks back at them a moment longer then walks out. Frazer immediately closes the door as Josh turns to Carol.

JOSH
So...Carol, can I get you
something to drink -- Vodka, gin
and tonic, little bourbon perhaps?

CUT TO:

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Bram glances across at Terry, hunched over in the corner booth, looking like a desperate character from the end of a James M. Cain novel. A beat.

TERRY
Why didn't he come to me with
this...theory?

BRAM
Maybe he's worried about you,
didn't want to say anything till
he knew there was someone was
gonna help.

Terry shakes her head at this.

TERRY
Help...right...

She stares out the window, suddenly looking as alone as she feels. The heat lightning flashes on the horizon as the TEARS well up in her eyes.

BRAM
You okay, Terry?

Terry looks up at him, red-eyed.

TERRY
Oh sure, I'm doing great...my whole life's falling to pieces, and now I'm sitting in a cheap bar with some guy I don't know from Adam, asking me dumb questions and trying to get me drunk on Creme de Menthe.

She turns away again, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand. A long beat. Finally she looks back at him.

TERRY
I'm sorry, I...I'm not handling this very well.

Bram shrugs.

BRAM
Maybe the Creme de Menthe was a bad idea.

Terry half-smiles at him. A beat.

TERRY
Is Josh right about any of this?

BRAM
(pause)
About the psycho thing, reading the story in the papers...?
(shrugs)
I dunno -- but a hacker?
(nods)
There's definitely someone out there's written a back door into our software, and I think they're using it to bounce off our mainframe into other systems and turn them against you.

TERRY
How do you know that?

BRAM
He leaves a trail.

He pulls some folded printout paper from his coat.

BRAM
(laying them down)
There's your phone bill,
utilities, credit cards, DMV
records, TRW, bank statements...

Terry stares down at the pile.

BRAM
And this...

Terry picks up the final page. A beat. Then she looks across at Bram

TERRY
It's from my address book...

And as he looks back at her, we...

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP: A COMPUTER SCREEN

It's the same page from Terry's address book, the first two names blocked out in blue, as the third slides up into the center of the screen.

CAROL MASON (DOGWALKER)

As the cursor winks and off we hear the machine tapping out a phone number then...

A PHONE

suddenly beginning to ring. An answering machine PICKS UP.

CAROL V.O.
Hi, this is Carol, you can get me
on 555-4204 for the rest of the
evening.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRAZER'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Establishing

INT. HALLWAY -- SAME

Carol, the beautiful baby-sitter, is standing BAREFOOT, talking on the phone.

CAROL
I don't know if I want to see you, Greg, you've been such a pain over me and Randy...

CLOSE UP TO A SCREEN

again. The cursor pulses over the phone number: 202-555-4204. It's dialed the number. The sound of the RINGING PHONE filters over the picture as the computer waits for Carol to pick up.

INT. HALLWAY

CAROL
Wait a minute, Greg, there's another call coming in.

She presses the receiver's key, clicking into the other line.

CAROL
Hello?

CLOSE UP TO THE SCREEN

as the cursor throbs.

CAROL V.O.
Hello?...Hello?

INT. HALLWAY

Suddenly Carol holds the phone away from her ear as a CHAOS OF ELECTRONIC NOISE pours out. She flicks back to Greg.

CAROL
I dunno, must've been a wrong number.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- SAME

As MTV BLARES in the background, Josh and Frazer are sitting on the sofa, arguing.

FRAZER
It's my house, Josh, she's baby-sitting for me and my sister, and I say no!

JOSH
First of all she's only here because my Mom gave your Mom her number, and second of all, I think she'd go for it.

Frazer looks at him.

EXT. HOUSE

Whoever this is Carol's talking to, he's really starting to get on her nerves.

CAROL OS
You are acting so mature about this...

Suddenly the lights in the upstairs room surge intensely, pouring white light out through the panes. A beat. Then the house is plunged into total darkness.

INT. HOUSE

It's pitch black.

CAROL
Oh my God.
(into the phone)
I don't know, we just had some kind of power cut.

Suddenly the lights snap back on. Carol stands in the hallway.

CAROL
Everybody okay?

She runs into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Josh gets up from the sofa as she comes in, pulling the twenty dollars from his pocket.

JOSH
Don't sweat it, Carol, probably just another storm coming in -- listen, Frazer and I've got this proposition for you...

CAROL
It'll have to wait, Josh, I'm on the phone.

INT. HALLWAY

Carol goes back to the phone.

CAROL
(into the phone)
No, everything's fine...

Behind her, Frazer's baby sister crawls across the hallway and into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

CAROL OS
What's Heather got to do with it?

The baby crawls into the middle of the kitchen and sits down to survey its new surroundings.

THE BABY'S P.O.V.

A wonderful new world towers overhead...a WORLD OF...

ELECTRIC KNIFE SHARPENERS

A world of

STEAMING KETTLES

A world of

SIMMERING SAUCEPANS

A world, in short,

WITH SEVEN MILLION WAYS TO DIE

The baby rather shakily looks off to her left.

A STATE OF THE ART OVEN

sits invitingly in the corner.

She gurgles and begins to crawl towards it. She plays with her reflection in the oven door for a while, then she looks up and sees the door handle, stretched out tantalizingly above her.

In one of the saucepans on top of the oven, the baby's milk is waiting to be heated. The bottle stands nearby on the work surface.

CLICK!

The ring beneath the saucepan flicks on.

The baby steadies herself against the oven door and begins to reach up for the handle.

In the saucepan her milk slowly begins to bubble.

The baby grabs at the oven door's handle, but misses, loses balance, and bounces down onto her diapered bottom. She takes a breath, then hauls herself up again.

The milk is now simmering, foaming, and begins to rise slowly up the pan above the baby.

The baby's hand moves inexorably towards the door's handle.

The milk rises inexorably towards the lip of the saucepan.

The baby grips the handle...

THE MILK

boils over and pours over the edge of the oven in a scalding stream...

THE BABY

grips the door's handle and pulls it open...

The milk drips harmlessly onto the inside of the door as the baby watches from her diapered bottom position.

The ring flicks off.

The baby laughs, and then clambers onto the oven door to get a better look at the scorched world inside.

Fascinating. She decides to go in for a closer look. But the moment her weight shifts off the edge of the sprung door, it snaps up, imprisoning her inside.

The baby stares out through the oven's glass as...

THE LIGHT ON THE OVEN SELECTOR DISPLAY

flicks on, and then clicks around from OFF to BROIL.

INT. OVEN

The baby looks around as the fan oven kicks into life.

INT. HALLWAY

Carol's still talking.

CAROL

Greg...

(louder)
Greg...I'm gonna hang up if you
keep saying things like that...

INT. KITCHEN

For a moment we watch from the far side of the kitchen as the temperature gradually climbs in the oven. A beat.

Suddenly Josh walks into the kitchen. The baby watches from inside the oven as he walks straight past without noticing. He goes over to the fridge, takes out a couple of sodas then walks back past the oven and out of the kitchen.

INT. HALLWAY

Josh walks past Carol, who's still talking on the phone, and flips one of the cans across to Frazer, hitting him in the back of his head.

INT. KITCHEN

Suddenly the oven door slams open, as the baby pushes from inside, and the little adventurer crawls out, still gurgling. She steps off the door which springs shut behind her.

The oven selector switch clicks off. Shit.

The baby crawls beneath the table and sits down by the breakfast bar.

Directly above him a HI-TEC IRON is resting on its heel on the sideboard. Suddenly its amber light flicks on.

The baby plays unknowingly beneath it as WISPS OF STEAM filter out from the holes in the iron's base, beginning to rock it, very gently, back and forth.

The skin on the baby's back is soft and smooth.

The iron wobbles on the very edge of the bar...then falls.

INT. HALLWAY

CAROL
I just don't think there's any
point in continuing this
conversation...

Suddenly there's a terrible SCREAM from the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

She runs in.

The baby is lying, WAILING, on the floor, the iron steaming a hole in the plastic tiles right between her legs. It's just missed her.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Carol walks back into the room holding the baby in her arms.

CAROL
(shaken)
Who turned the iron on?

Frazer and Josh don't know what she's talking about.

CAROL
(angry)
One of you turned that iron on and
I want to know who it was!

JOSH
(gazes back at her)
You know something, Carol, I think
you're even more beautiful when
you're angry.

CAROL
(still furious)
You wanna play hardball, that's
fine by me, you can start by
clearing the dishes.

JOSH
But we had this proposition for
you...

CAROL
Now, Joshua!

Then she walks out of the room and up the stairs to put the baby to bed.

INT. KITCHEN

Joshua and Frazer are clearing the table. Frazer glances round as Josh starts shoving leftovers into the waste disposal and flicks on the switch.

ANGLE: SINK UNIT

The blades of the waste disposal WHIRR into action, spinning round at incredible speed.

INT. KITCHEN

Frazer dumps the leftovers in the sink as Josh turns on the faucet and begins pushing the food into the disposal. Each time his hand disappears a little further down the hole.

ANGLE: THE SINK UNIT

As the food is pulped by the spinning blades.

Suddenly the blades stop, as if something had jammed them, except there's no apparent blockage.

INT. KITCHEN

Josh peers down the disposal.

FRAZER
What's wrong?

JOSH
Something must've jammed.

He rolls up his sleeve and pushes his hand into the disposal.

ANGLE: SINK UNIT

Very slowly Josh's hand probes deeper into the disposal. The blades just seem to be waiting.

FRAZER
Are you crazy!?

JOSH
Nothing's going to happen...

Almost the moment he says it he suddenly SCREAMS with pain as HIS ARM is dragged into the disposal unit. Frazer steps back in shock as Josh pulls free his hand, showing that it's COMPLETELY UNHARMED. Josh grins across at his friend.

JOSH
Just kidding, Fraze.

ANGLE: SINK UNIT

Looking up through the waste disposal, through the maze of curled blades, Josh's face reappears, peering back down the hole. He starts to put his hand in again...

CAROL OS
What's going on in here?

INT. KITCHEN

Josh glances round, immediately taking his arm out of the sink.

JOSH
Nothing, Carol, now come on and sit down with us, listen to our proposition.

CAROL
In a minute...

As Josh and Frazer walk out, Carol opens the dishwasher and loads in the plates and cutlery and twists the dial to WASH.

The machine GRUMBLES into life.

She takes the leftover food, opens the fridge door and slides it inside. As she's about to shut the door the light FLICKERS as if there's some kind of short. She pauses for a moment, then shuts it and walks out of the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM -- LATER

Frazer sprints in to what must be his mother's room, grabs some cash off the top of the bureau, and sprints back out again.

INT. LIVING ROOM

He runs in and gives the money to Josh.

FRAZER
Thirteen dollars...

Josh carefully folds it in with the rest of their money.

JOSH
Okay, that makes thirty-seven dollars and...

He flicks through the change in his hand.

JOSH
Twenty-eight cents...

Carol gazes back at them. A beat.

JOSH
Aw, c'mon, Carol, who's gonna know, even if we told anyone you think they'd believe us? Carol Mason took her clothes off for a couple of dweebs in the ninth grade!? Yeah, right...

Carol weighs this in her mind.

CAROL
(beat)
I'll unbutton my shirt.

JOSH
What about your bra?

CAROL
(final)
My shirt, that's it.

Josh sighs then glances at Frazer. He looks like he's going to faint with excitement. He just manages to nod.

JOSH
You got a deal.

He hands across the money which Carol counts then slips into her pocket. She looks back at them, sitting side by side on the sofa.

CAROL
You boys are definitely too old
for baby-sitting.

Then she carefully, slowly, EASES OPEN the first button of her shirt.

JOSHUA AND FRAZER

stare at her, bug-eyed as she works her way slowly down to the final button. Finally the shirt falls open.

JOSH
(voice cracking)
Do you...think you could
just...lean forward a little?

Carol thinks about this for a moment then very slightly leans forward. A beat. Then she pulls her shirt closed.

CAROL
Show's over.

THE TWO BOYS

just sit there, transfixed, as Carol walks out of the room and into the kitchen, buttoning her shirt again.

INT. KITCHEN

Carol gets a mug from one of the cupboards and spoons in some coffee. Then she switches on the kettle and flicks through a magazine.

Behind her a pool of water is gradually spreading across the kitchen floor from the dishwasher, moving closer and closer to her feet.

Carol turns the next page in the magazine, unknowing.

The dishwasher begins to shudder as it reaches the end of its washing sequence.

Carol taps her foot on the floor as the water comes closer and closer.

Finally the kettle comes to the boil and as it begins to WHISTLE the pool of water touches her feet.

Carol just has time to look down before:

THE DOOR OF THE DISHWASHER

bursts open and water pours out across the kitchen, soaking her legs, as:

A LETHAL BLUE SPARK

springs from a dangerously overloaded POWER STRIP and plays over the foaming pool of water.

As the CURRENT pours into her body convulsing and shaking her as it sucks her into its deadly grip, the kettle's whistle becomes a SCREAM.

CUT TO:

INT. TERRY'S HOUSE -- LATER

Terry is slumped on the sofa, crying, as Bram sits down beside her, gently touching her arm.

BRAM
Terry, you've gotta take it easy...

She glares up at him, red-eyed...

TERRY
Take it easy?! How can I take it easy, Bram -- three people have died, one after the other, just like they're listed in my address book, just like they keep appearing on your screens, and everyone keeps telling me they're accidents!?

BRAM
(gentle)
There's no evidence that they were anything else...

Terry stands up now, losing control completely.

TERRY
(yells)
How much evidence do you need!? How many more of my friends have to die before somebody starts taking this seriously!?

She stares back at him for a moment then the desperate tears crumple her back onto the sofa. Bram leans across and gently takes her into his arms, stroking her hair.

BRAM
It's okay -- it's gonna be okay.

She takes a few deep breaths and manages to fight back the emotion. Sitting up she looks back at him.

TERRY
(beat)
What do you think's happening, Bram?

Bram half-looks away, then gazes back at her.

BRAM
It's gotta be something to do with this hacker...

TERRY
But you said it yourself - a hacker can mess with your credit cards, can cancel your driver's license, can even empty your bank account...but there's no way anybody can kill someone with a computer!

As the tidal wave of desperation begins to close again Bram grips her by the shoulders, forcing her to concentrate.

BRAM
Listen to me -- I don't know what's happening yet, Terry, but if there's somebody working his way through your address book, I can get him but I need your help.

She nods, calming herself, wiping away the tears.

BRAM
Your Mom's the next number listed -- you've gotta get over there and disconnect anything electrical in the house.

Terry nods.

TERRY
What are you gonna do?

BRAM
I'm gonna tamper with the phone company system so that if anyone tries to access her number with a computer, the call'll be rerouted to Softec. I'll rig up a trace, get a number for this bastard, and then we've got him.

Terry can't stop the skeptical look that flashes across her face.

BRAM
(dry)
Trust me, I'm a computer genius.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERRY'S MOTHER'S HOUSE -- DAY

Terry's car is pulled up in the driveway alongside her mother's Cadillac.

INT. HOUSE -- SAME

A very EMOTIONAL-LOOKING TERRY is working her way through the house, pulling out the leads of every electrical appliance, her mother walking along behind, trying to grasp what insanity has grabbed her daughter.

MOM
I know you've been under a lot of pressure at work, honey, but I honestly think you're losing it a little here...

Terry just keeps pulling out leads.

MOM
Terry, will you please tell me what this is about?

She follows her out the room.

MOM (OS)
Wait a minute, I need that dustbuster...

INT. MOM'S BEDROOM

Terry is now working her way through her Mom's make-up table, as Cynthia looks on, her arms filled with unplugged gadgets.

TERRY
Everything's gotta be disconnected, and stay disconnected.

MOM
Not my heated curlers!

Terry pulls the lead.

TERRY
Everything...

MOM
But we've got bad hair weather till the weekend!

TERRY
And I'm gonna be with you till the weekend to make sure you don't plug any of this back in.

CUT TO:

INT. SOFTEC COMPUTER ROOM - LATER

It must be about 9:30 and the room's empty now except for Bram, who's sitting at his desk, reading a copy of the Enquirer.

He sighs, bored, drops the paper onto his desk, and pulls over the radio, tuning it to some oldies station. The DJ's taking phone requests.

Bram listens for a moment then looks at the phone wired to the answering machine.

BRAM
(impatient)
C'mon.

ON A BLACK AND WHITE SCREEN

in the Softec security room, a TV image of Bram sitting alone in the chamber, dwarfed by the massive processing units, flickers in the darkness.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM

Bram lights a cigarette then blows a perfect smoke ring, watching as it floats lazily away over his monitor. He chases it with another, then leans back in his chair and stretches.

THE PHONE

suddenly begins to RING. Bram snaps up as the answering machine CLICKS ON.

BRAM
(voice over, on the
machine)
Hi, we can't come to the phone
now, but if you leave a message
we'll get right back to you.

As the beep sounds and the tape begins to run, THE ELECTRIC CACOPHONY screeches from the phone.

BRAM
(grinning)
He went for it.

He immediately flicks on the modem and taps out a series of commands into the keyboard. On his screen the words:

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

"TRACE RUNNING" wink on and off.

BACK TO SCENE

Bram stubs out his cigarette as he stares at the screen, waiting for the trace to complete, unaware that behind the answering machine the plug has started to melt. A beat.

A SECURITY CAMERA high up on the far wall, slowly jacks around and refocuses...

INSERT - ONE OF THE BLACK AND WHITE SCREENS

in the security room, Bram slips into focus, in full close-up now.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM

Suddenly the monitor BLEEPS and the words "trace running" are replaced by:

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

"TRACE COMPLETE."

BACK TO SCENE

Behind Bram ANOTHER CAMERA, swings slowly around and refocuses.

He hits another key and THE HACKER'S NUMBER prints out on the screen.

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

"202-585-1272."

BACK TO SCENE

BRAM
Gotcha.

He immediately taps in a new command.

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

"IDENTIFY LISTING"

But before the computer can react the line goes dead, the dial tone RINGING OUT from the answering machine's speaker.

BACK TO SCENE

BRAM
Shit!

He checks the number on the screen then punches it out on the keypad of the modem and enters the call.

A beat as the line reconnects...

THE PHONE

directly behind him begins to RING.

Bram turns slowly around. A beat.

BRAM
That's impossible.

He turns back to his desk, and lifts the phone off the modem, breaking the connection.

The phone behind him immediately stops RINGING. A beat.

BRAM
(convincing himself)
I must have misdialled.

He checks the hacker's number again then taps it out even more carefully on the modem, drops in the phone, and enters the call.

A beat. Then the line connects again.

A PHONE

on the far side of the room begins to RING.

As Bram stares at it, the phone behind him begins to RING again, then another phone off to the left, then another close by on the right, until every phone in the room is RINGING.

Bram swallows, unable to take this in. He turns slowly back to the screen as the computer identifies the source of the hacker's calls.

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

"LISTING" winks on and off above the words.

SOFTEC COMPUTER - RESERVED MAINFRAME LINE

For a moment he just stares at the screen, then he reaches out and lifts the phone out of the modem.

THE PHONES

immediately all stop ringing.

Bram sits there, frozen, unable to take this in. Then suddenly all the lights are killed. It's pitch black except for one angle poise, which throws a small circle of light over his desk. Bram stares at it - the monitor still glowing, the radio request show still PLAYING.

As he starts walking slowly towards it the D.J. takes a new call.

D.J. OS
Okay, line five, you're on the air.

As Bram listens we recognize the SAME, FLAT, BLOOD-CHILLING VOICE that called Terry from the State Farm computer.

KILLER OS
I'd like 'Heat wave' by the Marvelettes.

D.J. OS

Okay, you got it...that for anyone special?

KILLER OS

It's for Bram Walker...

Bram stops in his tracks.

KILLER OS

...who I know is all alone tonight.

The line goes dead as the DJ cues up the record.

A bead of sweat appears on Bram's forehead as the darkness seems to close in around him.

THE PHONE

suddenly rings right beside him.

For a moment he's too startled to move, then very slowly he reaches out for the receiver, his fingers closing on the black plastic, raising it gingerly to his ear. A beat.

"HEAT WAVE" BLARES FROM THE EARPIECE.

Bram drops the phone and starts running towards the doors, his panic playing tricks on his hearing as the HUMMING of the processing units becomes more and more like the BREATHING of a hidden pursuer.

As he reaches the first door the electric security bolts:

SLAM DOWN

locking him in. He stares back into the darkened room, the Marvelettes SINGING and CLAPPING their way through his record. He turns and runs towards the next set of doors.

THUMP!

The bolts slam down again, blocking his exit. He HAMMERS on the metal.

BRAM

SOMEBODY GET ME OUT!!

Nothing. He turns back to the room. The third door is on the far side of the chamber...on the far side of a plunge through the darkness and the Marvelettes' WAILING. He takes a breath then throws himself forwards, running as hard as he can, pumping his arms, working his legs...

CRACK!

Something topples him to the ground. He lies there for a moment, PANTING, then looks up and sees the overturned swivel chair he must have careered into. He reaches out for a nearby desk and pulls himself up when suddenly:

THE KILLER'S EVIL FACE

stares out at him from inside a desk-top monitor, just inches from his eyes.

Bram YELLS and spins around as:

A FIGURE

looms up behind him, grabbing him, hard.

BRAM
AAAAHHH!!!!

A flashlight is shone into his face as the security GUARD tries to calm him down.

GUARD
It's okay, Mr. Walker, it's just security.

Bram stares back at the monitor -- the killer's face has disappeared.

CUT TO:

INT. TERRY'S MOTHER'S HOUSE -- NEXT DAY

Terry walks downstairs into the kitchen where Josh is already up, eating his breakfast. Brilliant sunshine streams in from outside.

TERRY
(kissing him)
Morning, Josh, how'd you sleep?

JOSH
Sleep? You're kidding, right, Mom -- countryside freaks me out, full of animals and shit, making noises all night, no streetlights for a hundred miles, gets so dark you think you've gone blind, and the bugs...I'm not surprised grandma says they don't sting, they don't need to, they're so big they just get up a little speed, knock you right over.

Terry laughs as she sits down.

TERRY
Where's Mom?

JOSH
Went into town to get some
groceries.

Terry glances out the window.

TERRY
Her car's still here.

JOSH
Yeah, she took yours, said she was
gonna gas it up for you.

Terry stares at him, the blood draining from her face...

TERRY
Shit...

EXT. MOM'S HOUSE - SAME

Terry jumps into her Mom's car and SCREECHES out of the driveway.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD -- SAME

Terry's car slips down the country road.

INT. CAR

Terry's mom's HUMMING along to the radio, some classical station. We go close on the CARPHONE, sitting beside her, just waiting. Suddenly it begins to RING. Terry's Mother looks at it for a moment, then picks it up.

MOM
Hello?

THE ELECTRICAL CACOPHONY

suddenly filters out from the phone. Terry's Mom frowns and then replaces the phone.

Suddenly the radio retunes. It's Evie Sands SINGING "Don't Let Go." Terry's Mom starts to SING ALONG to the tune.

INT. ENGINE

Beneath the hood the casing of the battery starts to melt.

INT. CAR

On the console the amp meter goes crazy.

EXT. CAR

The car surges forward, the engine suddenly beginning to SCREAM.

INT. CAR

Terry's Mother struggles to control the car.

Suddenly all the locks in the car snap down and the passenger window buzzes up.

EXT. INTERSECTION

It's a picture-postcard Virginia town, old colonial homes, neat lines of slow-moving traffic.

TERRY'S CAR

suddenly slams across the intersection, ignoring the red light, cars skidding and swerving to avoid it, while Evie Sand's WAILING tears through the small town summer afternoon.

INT. CAR MOVING

The needle hovers at 85 MPH. Terry's Mother presses her foot frantically on the brake.

INT. WHEEL ARCHES

The brake pads SMOKE and SCREAM as the engine drives the wheels furiously through their bite. Again and again the pads are eased off and then stamped back on, but the wheels burn straight through them -- inexorable, unstoppable.

INT. CAR MOVING

Another car LOOMS UP in front of her.

EXT. STREET

Her car SQUEALS out from behind the slower moving vehicle in front, tears past and just manages to swerve back in again before the oncoming traffic THUMPS by.

INT. CAR MOVING

As the needle touches ninety, the cruise control light flicks on and the gas pedal locks. The old Woman tries to flick it off but the control won't respond.

Suddenly her seatbelt snaps tight across her chest. She cries out as she's pinned into her seat. She struggles with the catch but it just won't move, it seems to have a mind of its own.

EXT. ROAD

From the very end of the long, straight road you CAN SEE Terry's car weaving in and out of the traffic, its lights flashing, other cars BLARING their horns, as it flies onwards, out of control.

EXT. RAILROAD CROSSING

The lights on the automated crossing flash red as the luminous gates begin to lower across the road.

INT. CAR MOVING

Terry's mother stares at the crossing ahead, fighting desperately with the controls of the car, stamping at the brakes, trying to wrench the gear lever across to neutral, twisting the ignition to OFF. Nothing works.

EXT. ROAD

Four hundred yards ahead the crossing races towards her and suddenly:

A FREIGHT TRAIN

slams past, its massive steel wheels shaking the crossing's structure.

INT. CAR MOVING

Terry's Mother wrenches at the wheel, stamping on the brakes in a final desperate effort to stop the car.

THE CAR

slews off the road and smashes through a chain-link fence into a trailer park.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As the CAR careers towards the back of one of the trucks, WE CAN SEE Terry's Mother SCREAMING behind the windshield.

ANGLE ON THE CAR

as it thumps into the back of the truck, the metal rig slicing off everything above seat back level, leaving a tangled mass of twisted metal that nobody over five foot could have survived.

A long beat as the wrecked car gently steams. Then Terry's mother slowly peers up over the shorn roof.

CUT.TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR -- DAY

Terry walks across from a payphone as Bram pushes through the swing doors and hurries towards her.

BRAM
Is she okay?

Terry nods.

TERRY
Josh is going to stay with her
till we get back...

BRAM
(nods)
Alright, let's go.

He begins marching away up the corridor.

TERRY
(going after him)
You haven't even told me what
we're doing here.

BRAM
It's where the killer died, Terry.

Terry stares across at him.

BRAM
It's where this whole goddam thing
began, and it's where we've gotta
start looking for some answers.

CUT TO:

INT. MRI SCANNER ROOM -- LATER

Bram and Terry sit across from the operator who we remember from the night of the storm.

TECHNICIAN
The night this guy died we were
dealing with all kinds of shit.
There was some huge electrical
storm, kept screwing up the
mainframe grid.

BRAM
(to Terry)
Total body scanner's a heavy duty piece of hardware, uses up more mainframe capacity than most hospital systems can supply, so they plug into a grid where companies like Softec sell their spare capacity -- night they brought the killer in that scanner was plugged into our mainframe.

TERRY
So what happened?

And suddenly we...

CUT BACK TO:

INT. SCANNER ROOM -- FLASHBACK -- THE NIGHT OF THE STORM

As the killer's rushed in and loaded inside the scanner.

THE KILLER'S POV

as the scanner's drums begin to rotate slowly around him and the lights in each cell begin to flicker and steadily grow brighter.

ON THE TECHNICIAN'S MONITOR

the three dimensional image of his body slowly begins to appear.

TECHNICIAN (VO)
Well, it was pretty weird, we were just scanning this guy when the grid shorts out, some booster station got hit by lightning...

EXT. HILLSIDE -- FLASHBACK

The BOLT OF LIGHTNING tears through the storm and blows the cap off the booster station in a SHOWER OF BLUE SPARKS.

INT. SCANNER ROOM -- FLASHBACK

On the technician's screen the 3-D picture of the killer is now highly detailed, the thermal images of his internal organs picked out in shifting patches of color.

TECHNICIAN (VO)
And the guy's scan gets fired off into the grid somewhere.

ANGLE: TECHNICIAN'S SCREEN

Suddenly a point of light appears in the very center and explodes outwards filling the whole monitor with dazzling white light.

TECHNICIAN
(shielding his eyes)
Fuck...

NURSE
Pulse is fading, he's dying.

INT. SCANNER

The killer's cold eyes flicker as...BLAM!

The whole screen fills with the same dazzling white light that washed out the technician's monitor.

ANGLE: THE MONITOR

suddenly the light sucks back through a point on the screen...

THE KILLER'S POV

as he slumps back on the point of death.

BLAM!!!

And suddenly we're sucked through the point of light too, as if we've been pinned to the front of a runaway subway train, flying through tunnels of fibre optic wiring, the electricity sparking in GREAT FLASHES around the walls.

WHAM!!!

as we burst into floods of information, the way a subway train bursts through stations, letters and numbers in vast, complex chains rushing past and over and under, and suddenly they're gone again as in the distance WE SEE something is moving towards us, vast, dark, inexorable, and we hurtle towards it until...

SMASH!

EXT. SOFTEC COMPUTER BUILDING -- NIGHT

The darkened building suddenly SHIVERS in an intense burst of light that pours out from inside.

INT. SOFTEC SWITCHING YARD -- SAME

In the midst of the chaos of cables one fat cluster SMOKES and begins to MELT.

INT. SOFTEC COMPUTER CHAMBER -- SAME

Every single monitor is GLOWING with the same dazzling light we saw in the scanner, and as it becomes more and more intense...

THE STRIP LIGHTING

running along the ceiling surges the same white light, then tube after tube EXPLODES raining down showers of glass.

Gradually the light fades, and we...

CUT BACK TO:

INT. SCANNER ROOM -- REAL TIME

Terry stares at the technician as the man shrugs.

TECHNICIAN
The scan never came back.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERRY'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Another summer storm crouches over the moonlit horizon, thunder RUMBLING in the distance.

INT. HOUSE

Terry checks that her mother's asleep, then walks out of the room, closing the door behind her.

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING

She looks into the room across the way -- Josh is also fast asleep -- then turns and walks downstairs.

INT. KITCHEN -- LATER

Bram sits silently in the flickering light of the candle that's burning in the middle of the table. Terry looks across at him.

TERRY
(beat)
What is happening, Bram?

Bram stares out the window as ANOTHER FORK OF LIGHTNING tears across the sky.

BRAM
I don't know, I...don't want to
believe it...

TERRY
Believe what?

Thunder RUMBLES outside as the storm draws closer. He looks back at her.

BRAM
When you put someone through an MRI scanner, you get a kind of record of all the electrical activity in their body and brain.

Terry nods. Bram takes out a cigarette.

BRAM
Well, if that operator we spoke to was right, and the grid which the hospital's scanner was plugged into overloaded at the moment of the killer's death...

He lights his cigarette and takes a drag.

BRAM
...it's just possible that his scan was shot out into the grid, and instead of being turned into an image the doctors could analyze, hit Softec's mainframe, leaving an exact impression of itself in the memory.

TERRY
An impression of what?

Bram pauses.

BRAM
I guess if you were religious you'd call it his soul.

As Terry stares at him, we...

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE -- LATER

Terry walks Bram across to his car. As they reach it and he turns to her, the storm begins to break, the RAIN falling in a light mist.

BRAM
Are you going to be okay?

TERRY
I'll be fine.

As she looks up at him the rain gets heavier.

BRAM
You'll call me in the morning?

Terry nods, and as Bram looks down at her the raindrops course across her face, soaking her clothes, and as they gaze into each other's eyes the desperation and the fear turn to desire, and suddenly they're kissing...

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP: A COMPUTER SCREEN

and Terry's name and phone number. There's the SOUND of the number being dialed out. A beat. Then there's the SOUND of the busy signal at the other end.

SUDDENLY

the name and number is cleared and the words "Washington Water and Power" appears on the screen. A beat. Then thousands of names and addresses start scrolling down the screen at incredible speed, until it suddenly stops at Terry's name and account number.

Again the screen clears and A PLAN OF WASHINGTON D.C. and its environs appears. All the power lines and routes are highlighted like some incredible spider's web. The computer isolates one of the suburbs then pulls it up in 3-D version and we're hurtling down the streets like some demented cruise missile until...WE STOP at one particular house.

A COMPUTER GENERATED VERSION OF TERRY'S HOUSE

and spread through like veins in a body, the electrical wiring ending at a LARGE FUSE BOX

CUT TO:

EXT. TERRY'S HOUSE

The fuse box sits in a wooden case on the outside of the side wall.

INT. TERRY'S BEDROOM

The lovers' bodies move urgently beneath the bedclothes.

INT. COMPUTER

The 3-D model of the house rotates as each power point is highlighted, and we...

CUT TO:

THE SAME POWER POINTS

the appliances' leads are pulled from their sockets.

AND INSIDE THE COMPUTER

we can feel the frustration building as suddenly HE finds a connected plug...

INT. BEDROOM

The rain beats down on the roof as Bram rolls onto Terry with the passion building, and suddenly we see...

THE CABLE

running out of the electric blanket, folded at the end of the bed. It drops under the frame and runs across to a powerpoint in the wall. As we watch, the dial FLICKS ON.

TERRY AND BRAM

shift beneath the sheets as

THE ELECTRIC BLANKET

slowly begins to fill out, gradually sliding up the bed, over the sheets, in what could almost be mistaken in the darkness as the figure of a SQUATTING MAN.

INT. COMPUTER

The darkness is illuminated by a SHIFTING THERMAL IMAGE, the twisting colors of two bodies playing across the screen as they MAKE LOVE.

THE COMPUTER

watches them, feels them, and as the passion builds

THE BLANKET

rises slowly up above them, the lovers too absorbed to notice until Bram suddenly, accidentally, KICKS THE CABLE with his foot and the blanket immediately flops down, harmless once again.

THE THERMAL IMAGES

snapping off.

INT. BEDROOM

Terry stops.

BRAM
What is it?

TERRY
Have you got something?

Bram stares back at her.

BRAM
What?

TERRY
You know...protection.

Bram shuts his eyes.

BRAM
Shit...

Terry can't help laughing.

TERRY
You might want to try in Josh's room.

Bram stares at her

TERRY
They give them out at school -- he hides them in his sock drawer...there must be two hundred in there.

Bram grins.

BRAM
God bless America.

Then he slips out of bed and pads out of the room.

INT. JOSH'S BEDROOM

Bram slips quietly inside, but as he tiptoes across to the drawers he sees JOSH'S PC, glowing in the darkness, illuminating the EMPTY BED, and the OPEN WINDOW, the drapes shifting in the breeze.

BRAM
(calls out)
Terry!

He glances at the screen -- rotating in 3D across it is a laser-bright model of the hospital's MRI SCANNER, all the electrical arteries and principal functions keyed out down the side.

INT. HALLWAY -- MINUTES LATER

Bram hurries after Terry, both of them dressed now, Bram pulling on his jacket.

BRAM
My pass is missing, he must've
gone to Softec.

And as they run out, we...

CUT TO:

EXT. SOFTEC -- NIGHT

A storm OF GOTHIC proportions lashes the building as...

INT. SOFTEC VAULT

In the BEAM OF A FLASHLIGHT Josh is soldering the cables of a LAPTOP COMPUTER into the access ports of the mainframe's switching yards. He checks the seals then pulls a FLOPPY DISK from his coat and loads it into the drive, tapping out a series of commands. As the responses start to appear on the screen he plugs in his MODEM and dials out a number on the pad.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP: A PRINTER

as its dot matrix head HAMMERS out a document.

WIDER - HOSPITAL MORGUE -- NIGHT

An ATTENDANT tears it off and reading it, walks past his partner, kicking him awake.

ATTENDANT 1
They want 117 up in the MRI...

ATTENDANT 2
What are they, crazy?

ATTENDANT 1
Do yourself a favor, keep your
head down and do what you're told.

He pulls open one of the heavy steel drawers and slides out the CORPSE inside.

ATTENDANT 2
But nobody scans a stiff.

ATTENDANT 1
Nobody mistakes a right leg for an appendix either but some numbnut doctor managed to saw one off last week by mistake.

The second attendant wheels over the gurney.

ATTENDANT 2
Friggin doctors...

CUT TO:

INT. SCANNING ROOM

The lights are out and the room is deserted. But as we slide slowly round we can make out THE CORPSE lying inside the MRI.

CUT TO:

INT. SOFTEC VAULT

Josh spits in his palms then rubs them together.

JOSH
(grins)
Alright -- gentlemen, start your engines.

He hits a key and the portable's drive begins to SPIN.

INT. SCANNER

The lights on the control panel flicker into life as the power begins to course through the machine.

INT. SOFTEC VAULT

Josh glances up as something heavy suddenly THUMPS DOWN in the darkness.

JOSH
(beat)
Anyone there?

There's no reply. Slowly he picks up the flashlight and shines it round the vault. Nothing. THUMP! The sound comes again. Frightened he begins to pick his way gingerly back through the vault.

ANGLE: THE VAULT DOOR

as another bolt CLANKS DOWN. Josh reaches out and tries the door. It's locked tight.

JOSH

Who's out there!

Silence. And then, faintly at first, the sound of music. Sixties music. Coming from somewhere back in the darkness of the vault. Josh swallows as

THE HUGE CIRCULAR AIR VENT

suddenly stops blowing. The metal CREAKS for a moment, then the motor reverses, dragging the plastic flyers that ring the vent back through the grate as it begins to SUCK THE AIR FROM THE VAULT.

CUT TO:

INT. SOFTEC CORRIDOR

Bram and Terry hurry in from the parking lot.

BRAM

It was a breakdown of the scanner on his screen, he'll be trying to access it from the switching yard...

As they turn the corner their way is suddenly blocked by the SOFTEC SECURITY GUARD.

BRAM

Out of the way, Charlie, this is an emergency.

The guard won't move aside.

GUARD

You know the rules, Mr Walker, no after hours guests without an authorized security pass.

BRAM

Screw you.

Bram pushes past but as he marches away the guard PULLS HIS AUTOMATIC FROM HIS HOLSTER.

GUARD

Hold it right there, Walker!

Terry immediately lashes out with her foot, crunching it into the man's groin, and as he collapses to the ground snatches up his gun.

INT. SOFTEC VAULT

Josh is lying on the floor beside the locked door, sweat standing out on his brow as he GASPS for breath in the thinning air.

Suddenly we hear a THUMPING from the other side and Terry's FAINT VOICE.

TERRY
(O.S.)
Joshua! Can you hear me!

Josh tries but is too faint to shout back.

INT. VAULT CORRIDOR

Bram is tapping the access code into the keypad by the door but it's locked him out.

BRAM
It must have switched all the key codes -- I'm gonna have go back up to the central control system.

TERRY
Fuck the central control system.
(shouts)
JOSHUA, GET DOWN!

Then she levels the gun and EMPTIES THE CLIP into the door's locking mechanism.

INT. SOFTEC VAULT

The door slides open, the air RUSHING IN as Terry pulls Josh up into her arms, hugging him tight.

Bram steps across to the laptop and lists out the commands.

TERRY
(cradling Josh)
What were you trying to do?

BRAM
Reverse the process on the scan, looks like...

JOSH
(still faint)
Figured it might bring him back, give us something to kill.

Bram shakes his head.

BRAM
Would never have worked, Josh --
you can't kill this guy, you gotta
erase him.

CUT TO:

INT. SOFTEC SECURITY ROOM -- LATER

The guard sits bound and gagged in front of the panel of flickering black and white monitors.

ANGLE: ONE OF THE MONITORS

a grainy image of Bram, Terry and Josh clustered round a work station flickers across the screen.

INT. COMPUTER CHAMBER

Bram types in the final set of commands then glances at Terry.

BRAM
Okay, pass me that disc.

Terry hands the floppy over and Bram slides it into his drive.

JOSH
You thought what's gonna happen if
that virus just turns him into a
bunch of tax rebates?

BRAM
I've added a couple of wrinkles,
should eat up all the memory till
he's got nowhere left to hide, end
up driving him out of the system.

TERRY
Drive him out where?

BRAM
I've only left one exit port open,
hooked it on-line to a computer
used to be run by a friend of
mine.

Terry shakes her head.

TERRY
Just what we need, another
computer.

BRAM
This one comes with a little
bonus...

They both look at him.

BRAM
Sits on top of the biggest damn magnet in the city.

He punches a button.

CLOSE UP: THE COMPUTER SCREEN

and the words - "Virus Running" - winking on and off on the screen. And suddenly...

WE PLUNGE THROUGH THE CURSOR

racing down a dark tunnel towards a faint glow at the end, which burns brighter and brighter as we accelerate towards it until...BLAM!

WE'RE INSIDE THE COMPUTER

but not in the tangible dimension of silicon hardware, but the 3-D, laser-bright world of an alternative computer reality...an alternative computer HELL.

And suspended, spider-like at the very center of a vast web of glowing lines which wind off into the ether, into every network, every system, every computer in the country...

THE KILLER

rotating slowly as he snaps from 2-D to 3-D. Suddenly the web SHIVERS then shakes more violently, and as the killer shifts we see...

THE BLACK HOLE

of the virus, slowly unfolding as it begins to suck every strand of light, and color, and information, into its dark core. And as the shadow falls across the killer he suddenly SWITCHES into a different dimension, running through the ether as everything around is sucked back into the ever-expanding point of blackness.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

Even in the darkness we can see it's a little shabby, run down. Suddenly a shot RINGS OUT...

ANGLE: A DOOR

as Bram kicks it open from the far side, the splintered lock giving way. He walks in with Terry and Josh and they stare round the...

VAST, FOOTBALL FIELD-SIZED SPACE

filled with a series of HUGE STEEL COILS, rising way up to the girders above.

JOSH
What is this place?

BRAM
Georgetown Particle Accelerator, mothballed six months ago 'cos of government cuts.

TERRY
So where's the magnet?

BRAM
Whole friggin thing's a magnet -- when we fire that freak into those coils we're gonna blow him into a billion bits of nothing.

Terry stares up at the vast apparatus for a moment.

INT. ACCELERATOR CONTROL ROOM

Terry and Josh look out from the glassed-off room twenty feet above the chamber floor as Bram walks over to a keyboard and taps in a new series of commands.

BRAM
(beat)
He's gonna be with us any second.

They all stare down at the monitor, waiting, watching. And faintly at first but gradually getting stronger, a FAINT GLOW begins to spread across the screen.

TERRY
What is it?

JOSH
It's him, it's working!

Bram frowns, something isn't right about this.

ANGLE: THE SCREEN

as the shifting shapes gradually begin to come together, until

THE KILLER'S FACE

is once again staring up at them. Except this time there's something different about it, something even more evil, even more frightening.

JOSH
Oh my God, that is the coolest thing I have ever seen in my entire life!

TERRY
(grim)
Shred his psycho ass!

Bram is still staring at the screen with a strange look on his face.

BRAM
Oh shit...

Terry stares at him.

TERRY
What's wrong?

BRAM
(beat)
He's not in the computer.

JOSH
What are you talking about, man, he's right there.

Bram swallows once. Very hard.

BRAM
That's a reflection.

There's a heart stopping beat, then they slowly turn to see

THE KILLER

standing in the gloom of the control room for the first time, WEARING HIS OWN BODY -- half-electronic image, half-autopsied corpse, his chest has been completely sectioned from neck to groin and crudely stitched back together. The top of his skull has been sawed off and a kaleidoscopic electronic image bubbles where his brain was. Through his lifeless skin strange, electronic data pulses and shifts.

KILLER
Sorry I'm late - but traffic was a bitch.

Terry SCREAMS as the killer grabs Bram and hurls him across the room, SMASHING through the windows, and thumping down onto the floor way below.

INT. ACCELERATOR CONTROL ROOM

The killer slaps Josh onto the floor then grabs Terry and pulls her into his arms.

CLOSE UP: HIS FACE

as Terry stares into it, just inches away, the electronic image shifting beneath the dead flesh.

KILLER
What do you say we kiss and make up?

As his mouth opens...

JOSH

grabs up a small FIRE EXTINGUISHER and BLASTS A STREAM OF CO2 over his rotting body, FLASHES OF SHORTING CURRENT playing across the room.

The killer turns on Josh, grabbing him by the neck, as Terry screams with rage, snatches up the extinguisher and swings it round in a vicious arc, SMASHING it into the killer's head, knocking him THROUGH THE BROKEN WINDOW.

INT. ACCELERATOR CHAMBER

THUMP!

He smashes down onto the metal floor right beside Bram. A beat. Then he turns and grimaces at him.

Bram pulls out the security guard's automatic and FIRES at the killer, the round blowing a hole through his flesh. But he doesn't even flinch, the wound just revealing more of the ELECTRONIC SOUL inside.

THE KILLER

snatches the gun from his hand, aims it at Bram and EMPTIES TWO ROUNDS into his leg. As he raises his aim to Bram's face...

THWWWAAACKKK!!

He reels sideways as a METAL CROWBAR slams into the side of his head.

TERRY

grips the bar, gritting her teeth as he turns to face her.

TERRY
Just try me, you son of a bitch!

The killer lurches toward her and she SWINGS THE BAR AGAIN, even harder this time...

KEEERRRAAACKKK!!!

He blocks it with his hand, twisting it out of her grip, then smashes her back against the wall.

KILLER
Been looking forward to this a
long time...

He raises the bar, ready to smash it down into her face...

BRAM
(yelling up to the
control room)
Josh, hit the switch -- now!

INT. ACCELERATOR CONTROL ROOM

Josh flicks the switch across then stares down at the chamber floor.

INT. ACCELERATOR CHAMBER

The HUGE MAGNETS inside the coils HUM into life.

ANGLE: THE CROWBAR

as it sweeps through the air and suddenly STOPS DEAD.

THE KILLER

stares at it, trying to force it down but it won't budge, and suddenly it EXPLODES out of his hand like a bolt from a crossbow and SLAMS up against the magnet casing.

Terry runs across to Bram as the killer forces round the gun, straining to hold it steady.

CLOSE UP: THE MUZZLE

as a bullet EXPLODES OUT at 22,000 feet per second, flies towards Bram and Terry then curls round and SLAMS into the magnet casing beside the bar.

THE KILLER

stares down as the gun is RIPPED FROM his hand.

ANGLE: BRAM

as he suddenly SCREAMS as the bullets TEAR OUT of the wounds in his leg, followed by the steel rivets from his jeans and the buckle from his belt.

And as Terry glances across at the killer, he suddenly staggers, his electronic soul beginning to STRETCH out of his body as he GROANS and then SCREAMS, all the shifting strings of laser data sucking into the accelerator coil until

HIS BODY

drops, empty, to the metal floor and as Josh runs across to his mother they glimpse the killer's TERRIFIED FACE...

TERRY
Have a nice flight, asshole.

SMASH CUT TO:

THE KILLER'S POV

as he explodes into the accelerator and is rocketed at incredible speed round the steel rings, faster and faster, his screams ECHOING OUT until suddenly we see

THE WALL OF ELECTRONS

racing towards him and he

DISINTEGRATES INTO A BILLION POINTS OF LIGHT.

CUT TO:

EXT. ACCELERATOR PLANT - LATER

A cluster of flashing lights and emergency vehicles. Terry and Josh climb into the back of an ambulance.

INT. AMBULANCE

Bram is lying on a stretcher, a drip pushed into his arm. Terry looks down at him.

TERRY
That was one helluva first date.

Then she leans down and kisses him.

BRAM
(beat)
It still hurts.

Terry smiles and kisses him again.

JOSH
(appalled)
God, Mom...

She turns and pulls Josh into her arms. A beat.

BRAM
Hey, Terry?

She looks at him.

BRAM
Would you do me a favor?

TERRY
Anything.

He glances at the EKG monitoring his heartbeat with its sinister, green ELECTRONIC BLIP.

BRAM
Would you turn that damn machine off?

Terry gives a final smile and flicks it off.

EXT. STREET

And as the ambulance pulls away, we...

FADE OUT.